Solo Leveling
7
DUBU
(REDICE STUDIO)
Original Story by
CHUGONG
Adapted by
h-goon

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Leveling
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DUBU
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CHARACTERS

Jinwoo Sung

S-rank Hunter

Haein Cha

S-rank Hunter,
Hunters Guild

Yoonho Baek

S-rank Hunter,
White Tiger Guild

Jongin Choi

S-rank Hunter,
Hunters Guild

Byunggu Min

S-rank Hunter (Healer)

Dongwook Ma

S-rank Hunter,
Fame Guild

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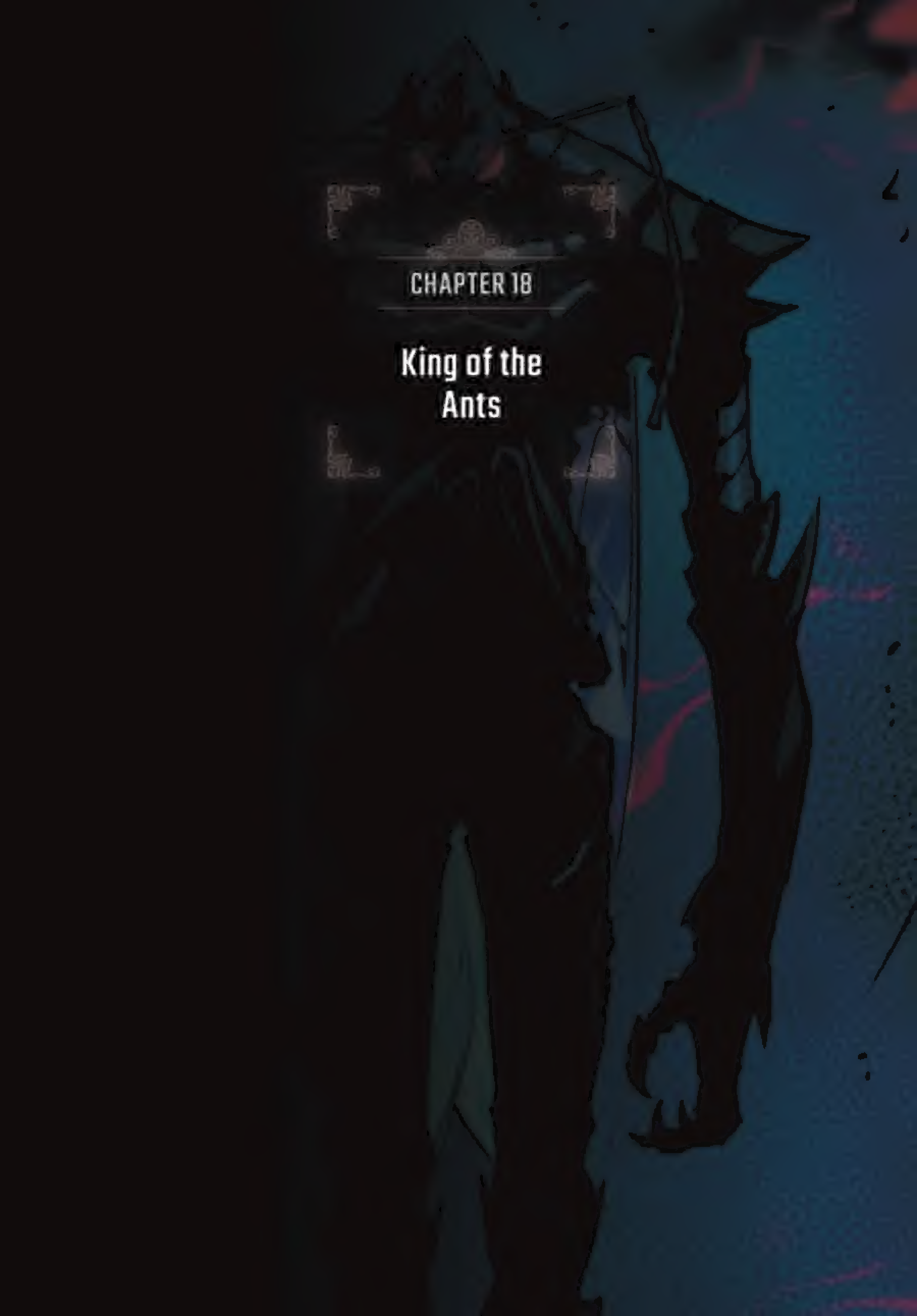
Solo
Leveling


CHAPTER 18
King of the Ants

Solo Leveling

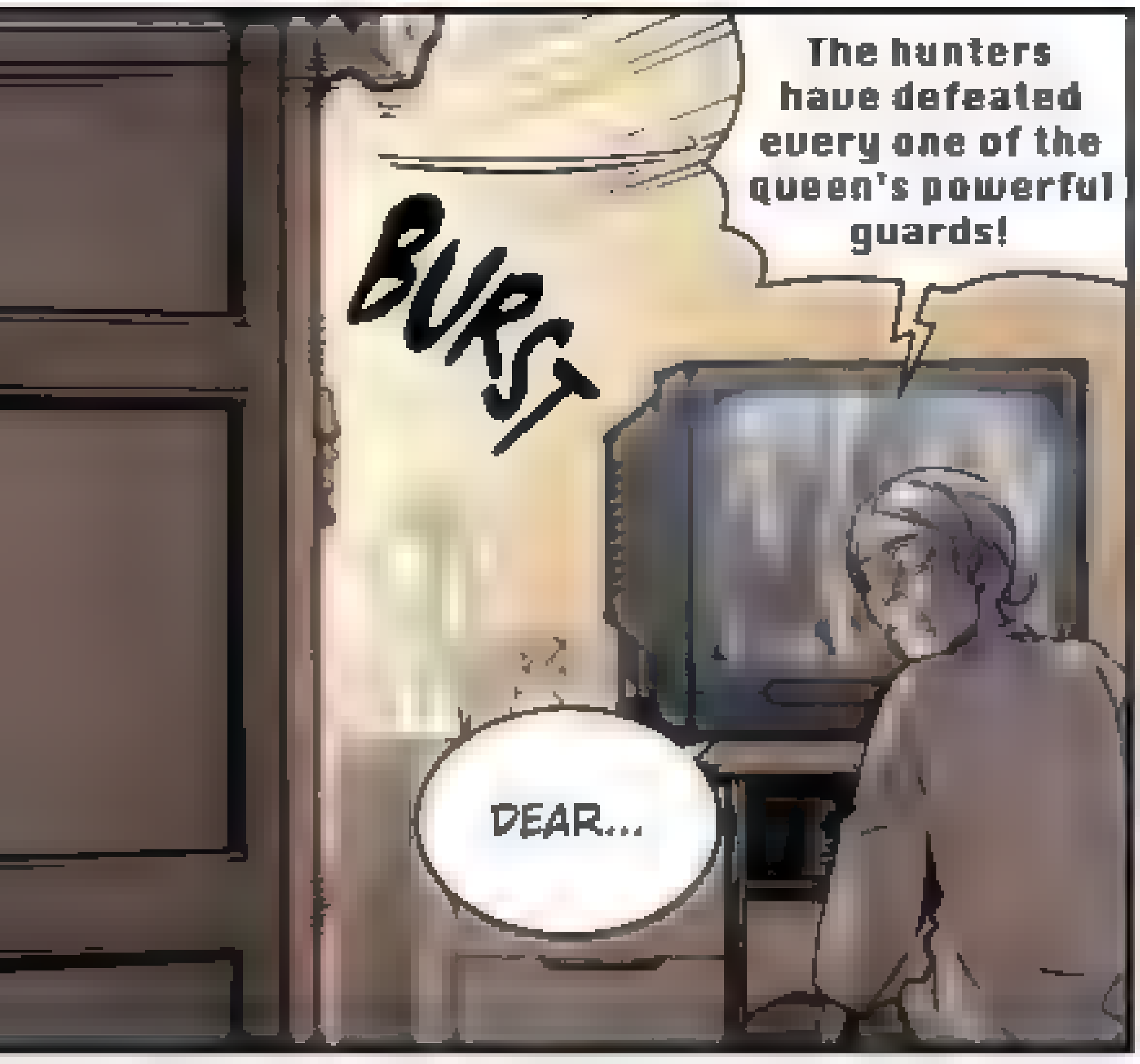
HUNTER CHA, TAKE CARE OF THIS!!
VWOOM
PROVOCATION VIBRATION!
KRA KOO OM

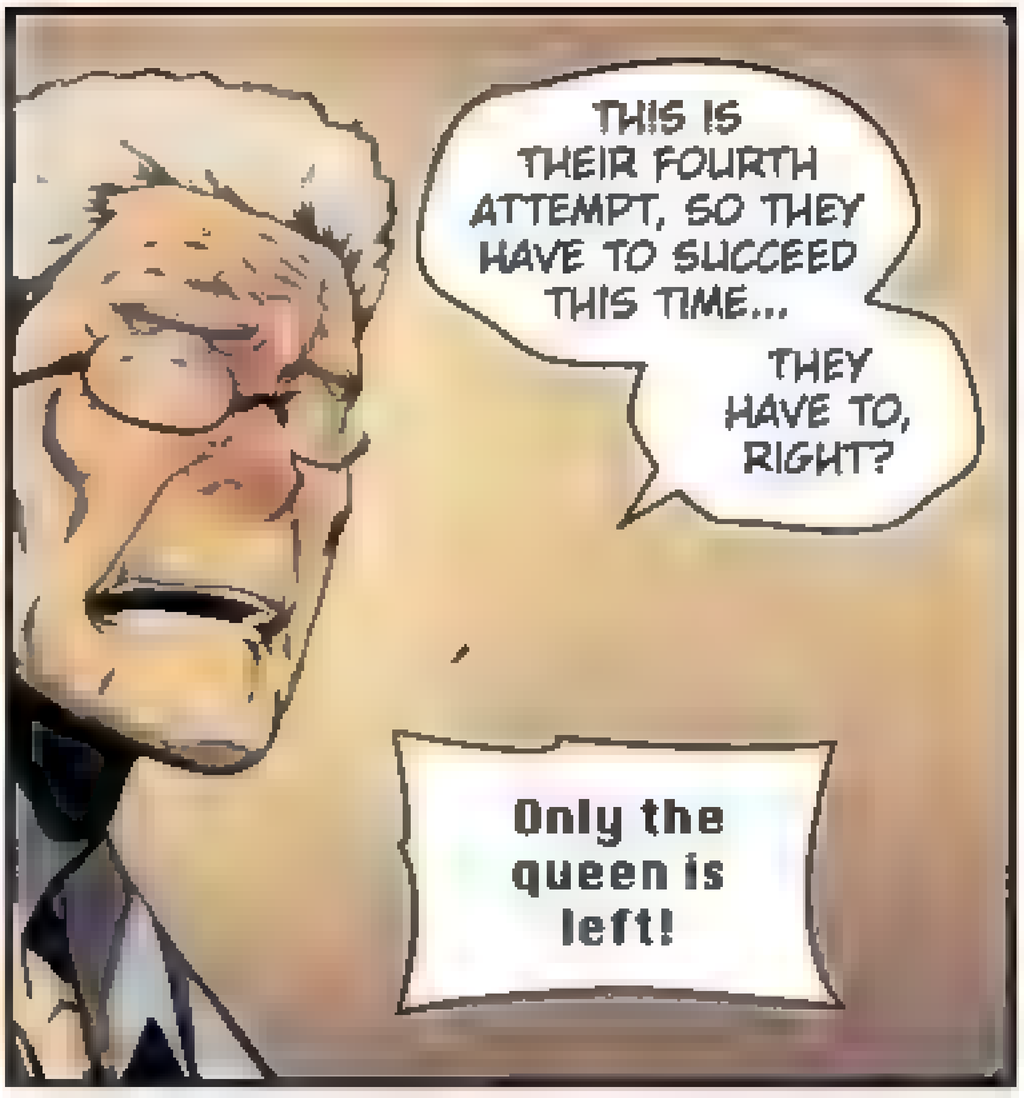
THE ANTS ARE DISORIENTED!
I'LL KEEP THE QUEEN BUSY...
...UNTIL ALL HER GUARDS ARE TAKEN DOWN.
YOU'RE MINE!

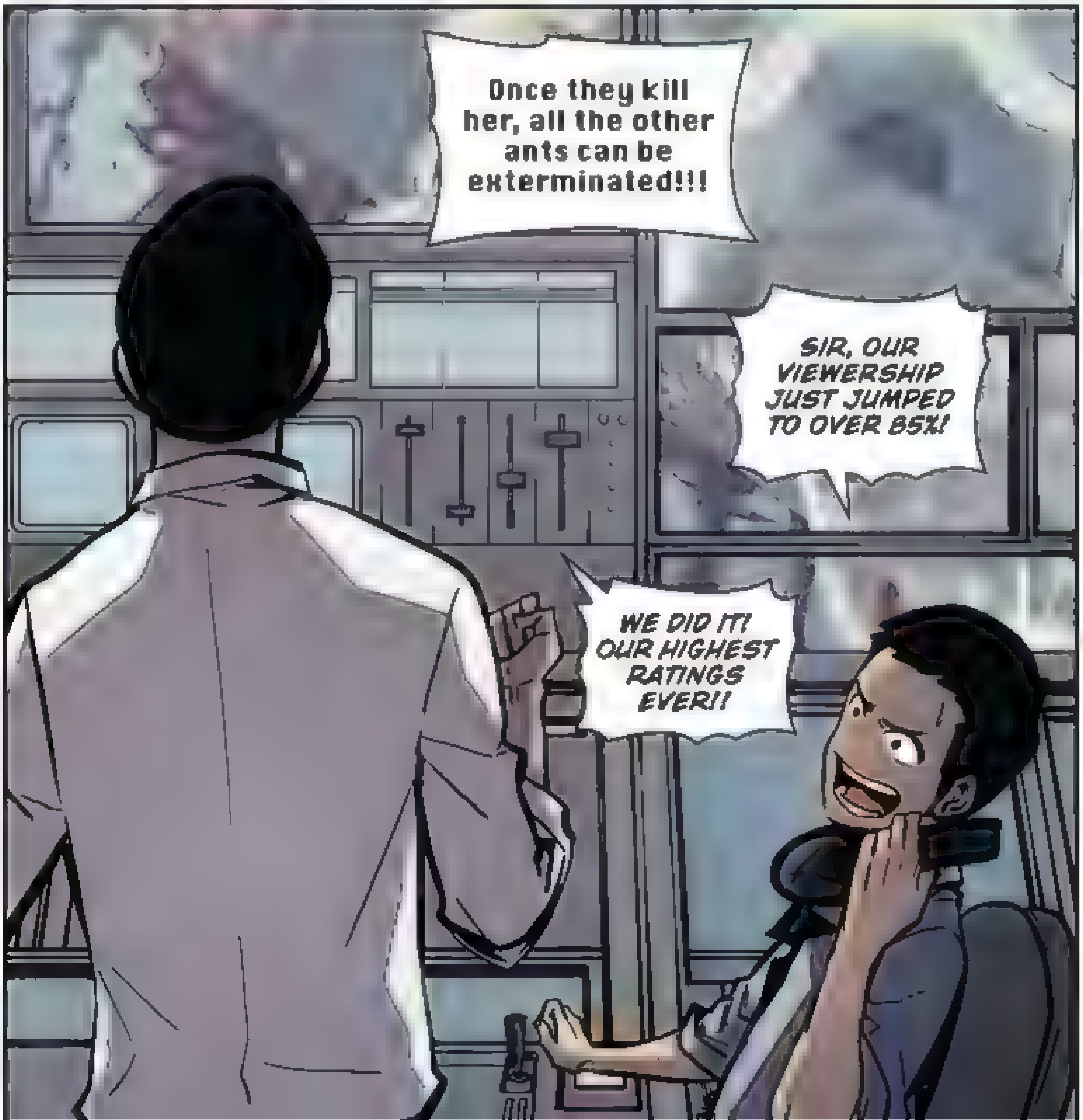
HAS THE RAID STARTED FOR REAL?
We've got an 80% rating right now! Move up so the viewers can see things better!
GRAB
80%? IF I PUSH A LITTLE HARD—
THERE'S AN S-RANK DUNGEON BOSS IN HERE.
NO ONE WILL BE WATCHING OUT FOR YOU.
IF YOU GET WHAT I'M SAYING, STAY BEHIND ME.
THE REAL BATTLE STARTS NOW.
AREN'T HEALERS SUPPOSED TO BE WEAK?
HE LOOKS LIKE HE COULD EVEN TAKE AN A-RANK LIKE ME!

THE HUNTERS ARE ON TV, DEAR. AREN'T YOU GOING TO WATCH?
DON'T CARE.
DON'T BE LIKE THAT...THE PEOPLE ON TV SAID THERE'S A REALLY GOOD CHANCE OF DEFEATING THE ANTS THIS TIME.
HMPH. THOSE IDIOTS ALWAYS SAY THE SAME THING. I SAID I DON'T CARE.
THEY'RE GOING TO AVENGE OUR ONLY CHILD!
YOU NEED TO WATCH THIS EVEN IF IT BREAKS YOUR HEART!
......
DAMN STUBBORN OLD MAN.
The hunters, the pride of Korea, have taken the first steps to confront the queen ant.

This is the queen's chamber! Look at the size of it! We've never seen an ant that big before!
Hunter Ma is faring well, but the other hunters need to take down the guard ants to help him!
Nn...nh!
Hunter Baek has defeated one of the queen's guards!
THAT STARTLED ME.
PEOPLE SEEM VERY EXCITED.
Four! There are only four left!
They've already taken out half of them!
It's down to three now!
There are only two guards left! After those two, they can go for the queen!
Victory is within reach!


The hunters have defeated every one of the queen's powerful guards!
BURST
DEAR...


THIS IS THEIR FOURTH ATTEMPT, SO THEY HAVE TO SUCCEED THIS TIME...
THEY HAVE TO, RIGHT?
Only the queen is left!


Once they kill her, all the other ants can be exterminated!!!
SIR, OUR VIEWERSHIP JUST JUMPED TO OVER 85%!
WE DID IT! OUR HIGHEST RATINGS EVER!!

The United States, China, Russia, and France! South Korea is about to be added to the list of countries that have cleared an S-rank dungeon!
KEEP GOING!
SHK SHK SHK SHK SHK
SKREEE!!
DON'T BE AFRAID! A QUEEN WITHOUT A GUARD IS LITTLE MORE THAN A SCARECROW!

FLASH
SPLRSH
RAAAAAH!!

VVVOOM
YOU SHOULD'VE AIMED AT ME.
DASH

WHAM
I CAN'T LET YOU GET TO OUR HEALER THAT EASILY!
EVERYONE OUT OF THE WAY!

BA
BA
BOOM

KA BOOOM

THE QUEEN IS FINISHED.
SKREE!
BASED ON MY YEARS OF EXPERIENCE, IT SEEMED INEVITABLE.
THE QUEEN WAS ABOUT TO DIE...
...AND VICTORY WAS CLEARLY IN SIGHT.
HOWEVER...

SKRAAAH!

WHAT WAS THAT?
WHOOOSH
A ROAR? A FINAL CRY?
NO, IT SOUNDED DIFFERENT.
SHE'S... CALLING FOR SOMEONE?

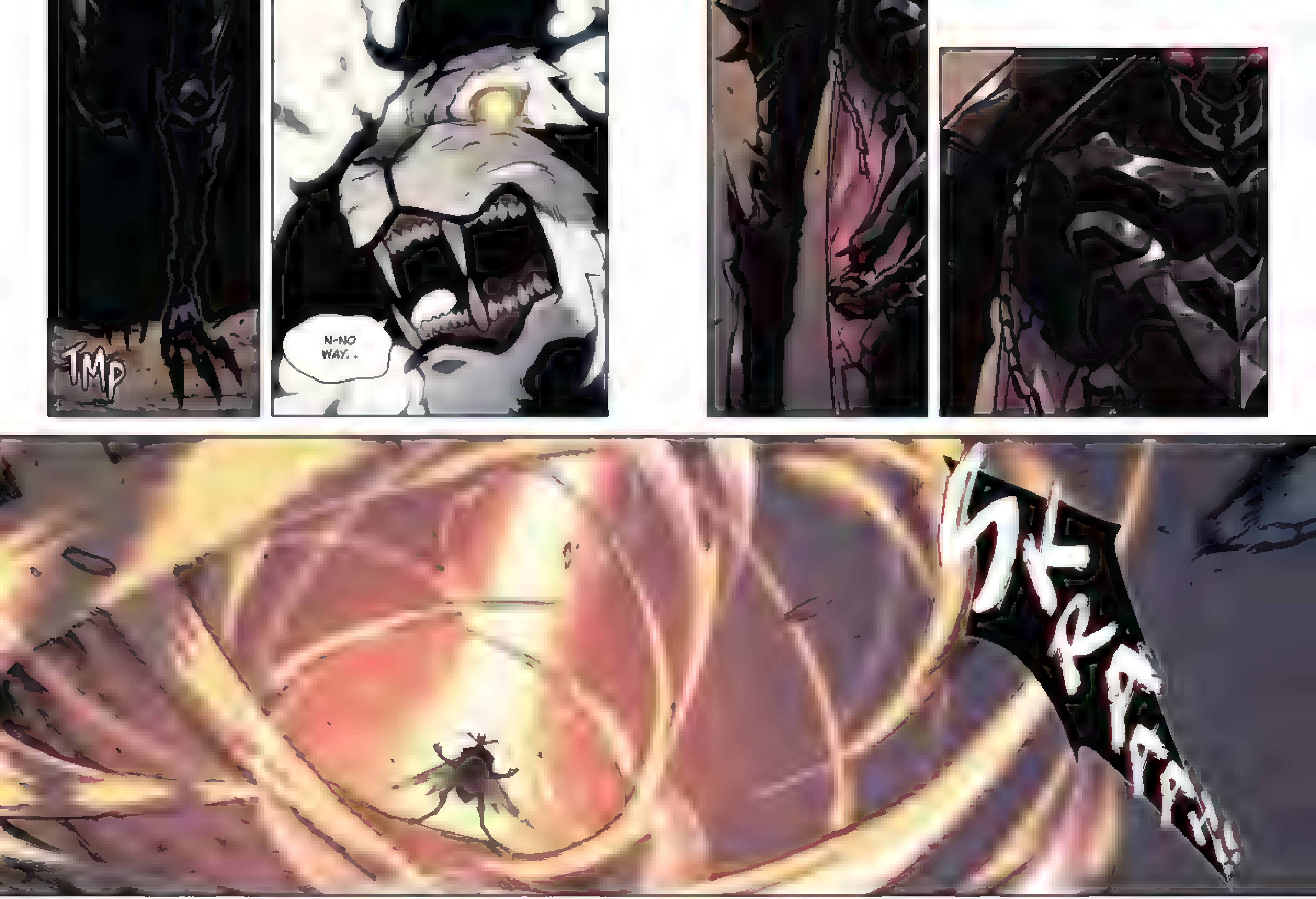
<Mr. Goto, the ants...!>
<They're heading back toward the nest!>
<The jammer isn't working on them!!>
<Huh?!>
<What the hell is going on?!>

SHUNK
THUD

IT'S OVER...
...RIGHT?
...DID WE JUST BECOME THE SEVENTH TEAM EVER IN THE WHOLE WORLD TO CLEAR AN S-RANK GATE?
HOLD ON. SOMETHING ISN'T RIGHT.
ALL THE ANTS ARE HEADED THIS WAY!
WE NEED TO EVACUATE NOW!
WHAT?!
I THOUGHT WE HAD LOADS OF TIME LEFT!
THE JAPANESE HUNTERS COULDN'T LAST EVEN AN HOUR?

WE DON'T KNOW WHAT HAPPENED! THE ASSOCIATION IS TRYING TO GET ANSWERS, BUT...
HAAH...
THE RING OF FIRE AT THE ENTRANCE IS...
...BROKEN?

DU
DUN


TMP
N-NO WAY...
SKRAAAH!!

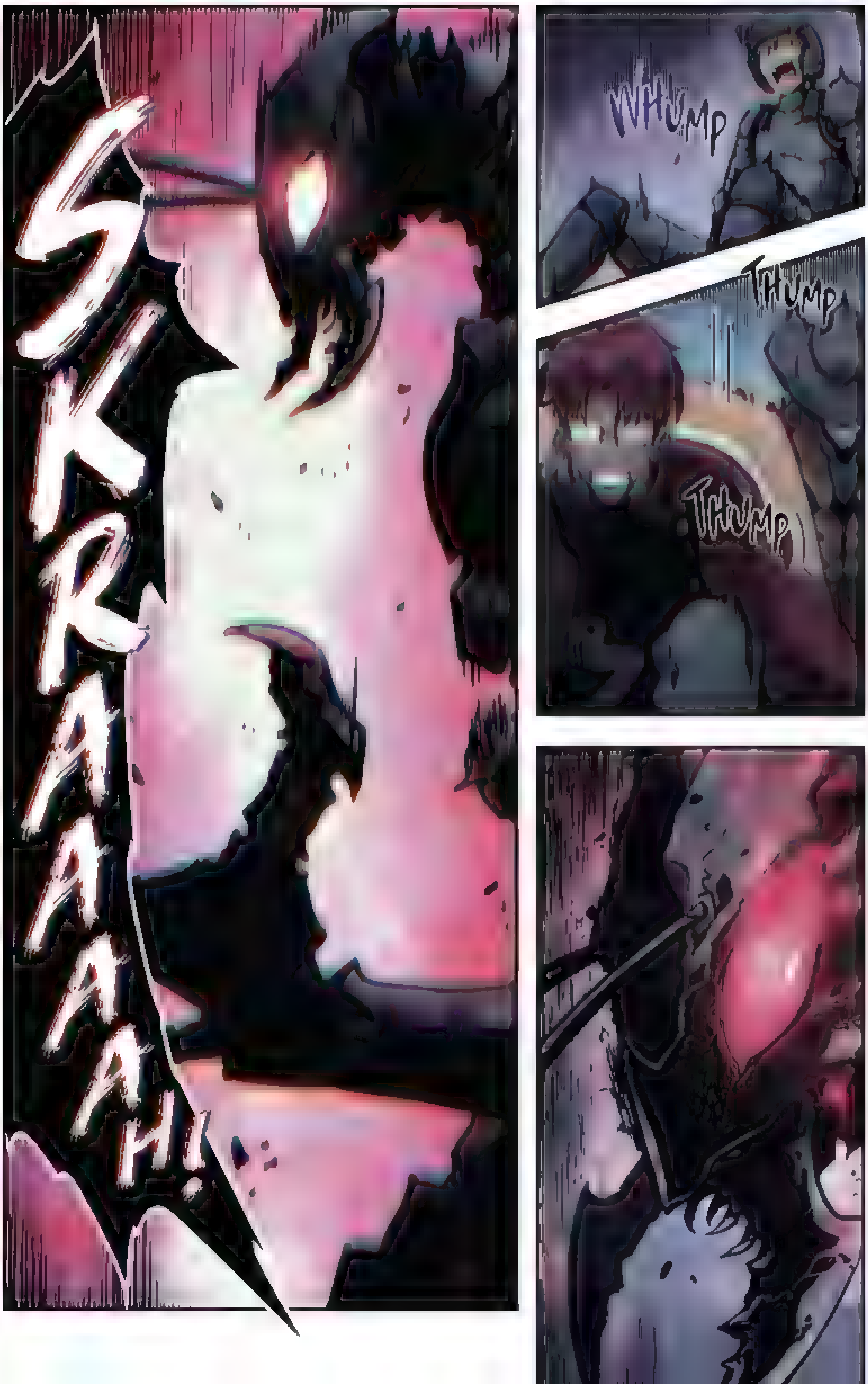
WHAT...
...THE...?
A SINGLE MAGIC BEAST
POSSESSES ALL THIS POWER...?

SLUMP
KHK!!

THIS HORRIFYING INTENSITY...
IT DOESN'T MAKE SENSE!
THIS...ISN'T ANY ORDINARY MAGIC BEAST!
STEP
STEP
STEP
THE BEAST THAT
NOWHERE...
...HAS FOOTSTEPS THAT ARE THE STUFF OF NIGHTMARES!
STEP

NO TIME TO HESITATE.
NEED TO GET RID OF THAT BASTAR—!
STEP
STEP
STEP

IT GOT BY US?
BA-DUM
BA-DUM
BA-DUM
KRRK

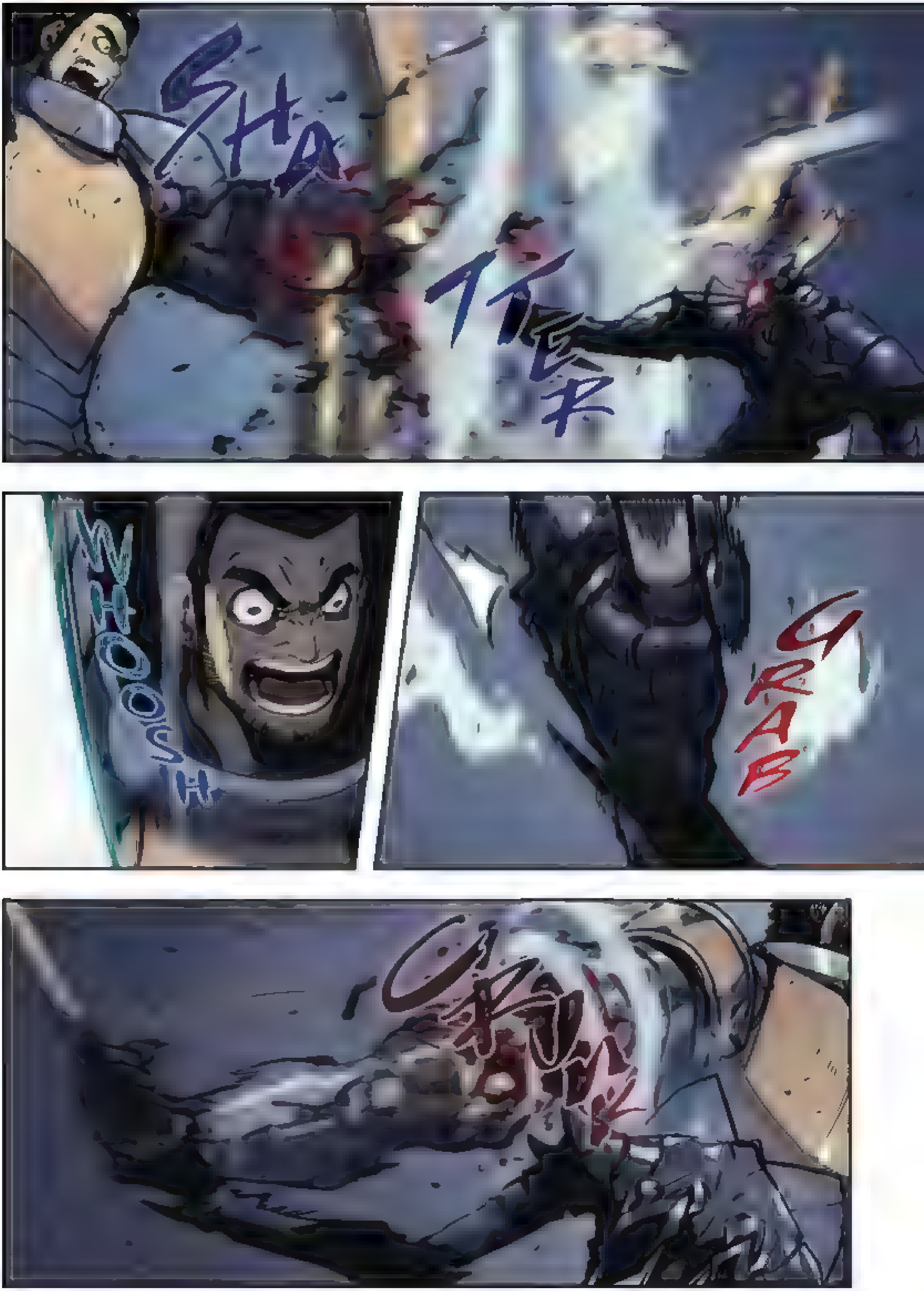

SKRAAAH!
WHUMP
THUMP
THUMP

NH...
UGH.
ZOOM

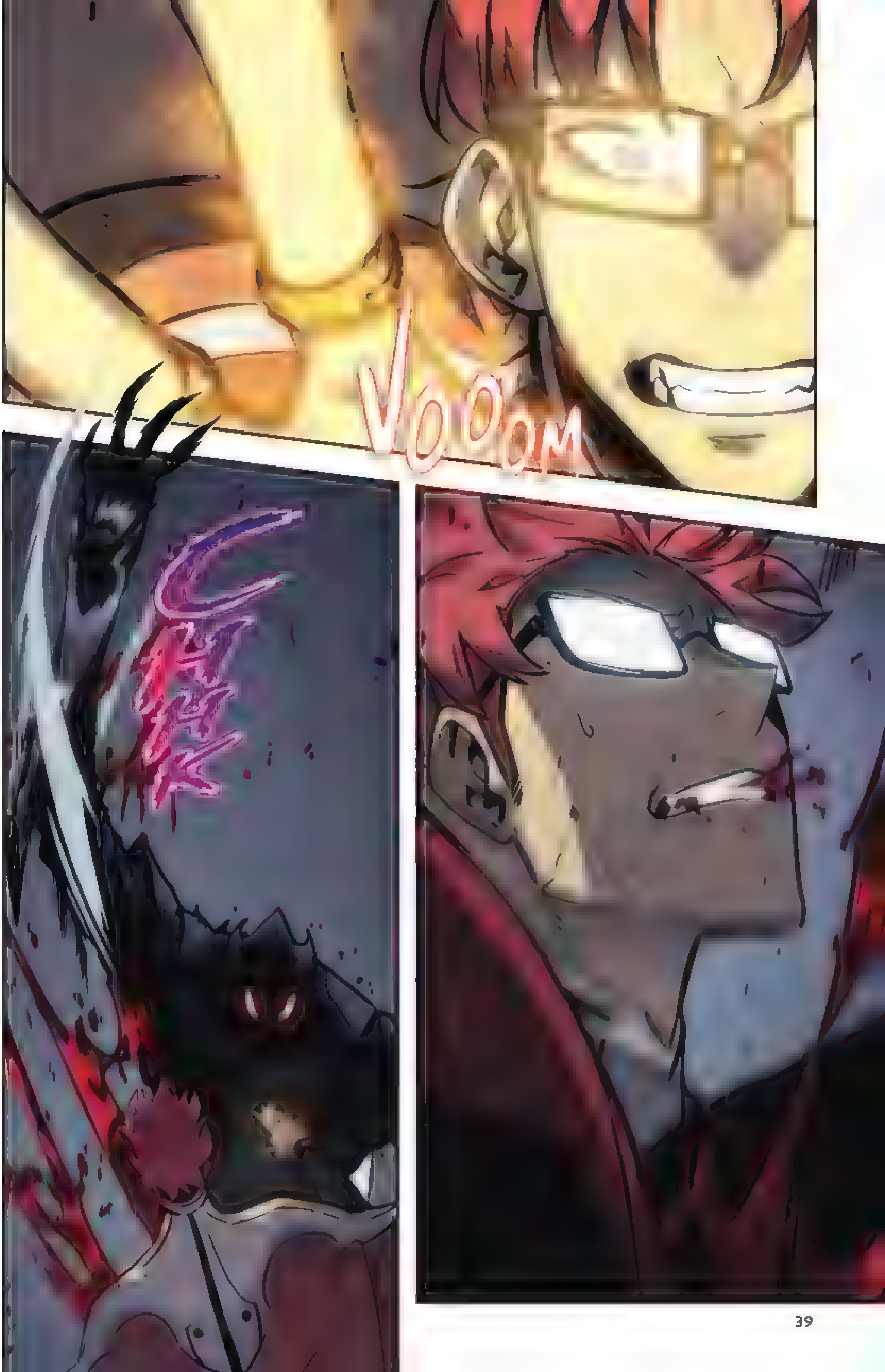
KRAK

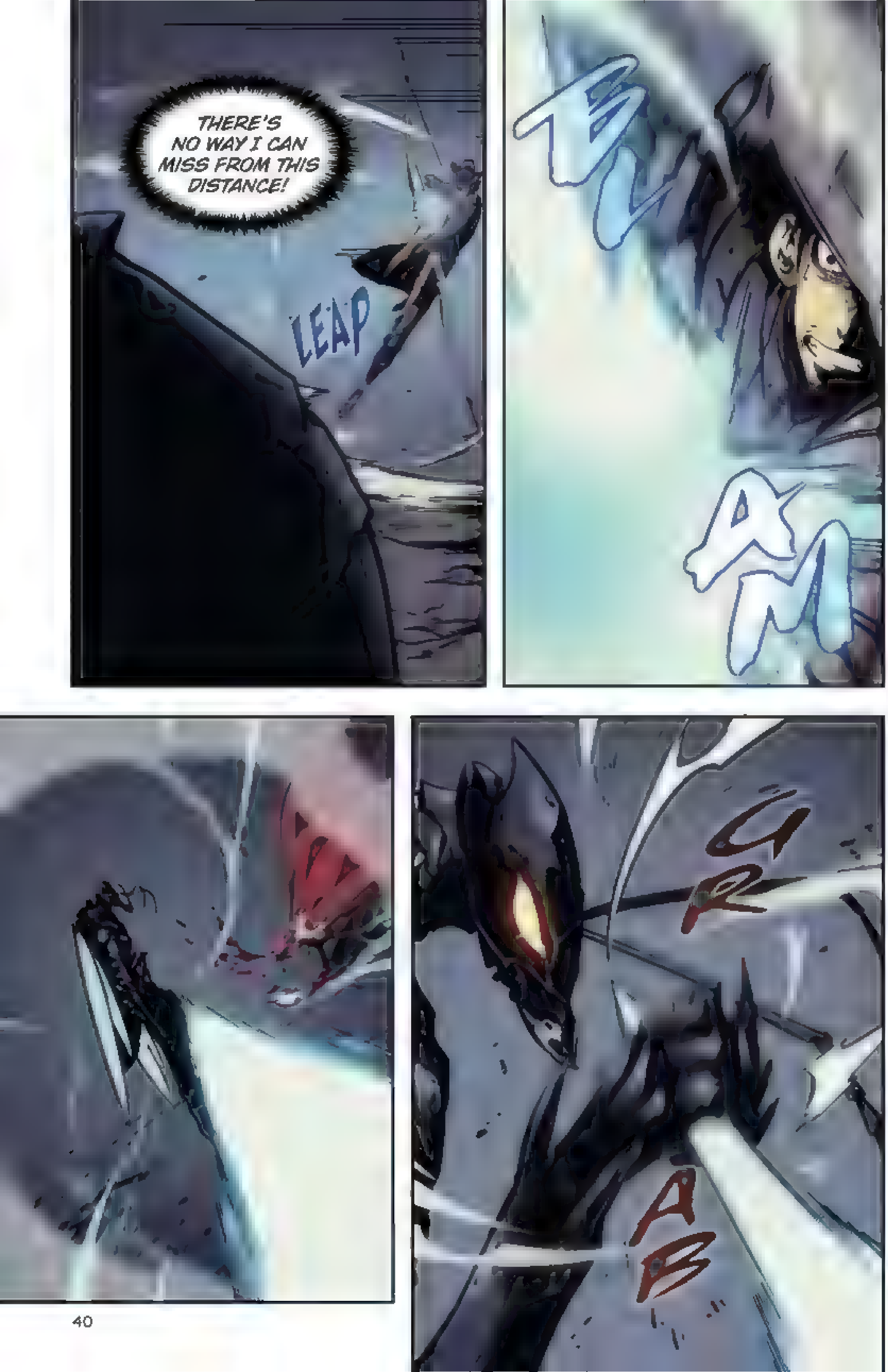
POW

HUNTER
CH—


SHATTER
WHOOSH
GRAB

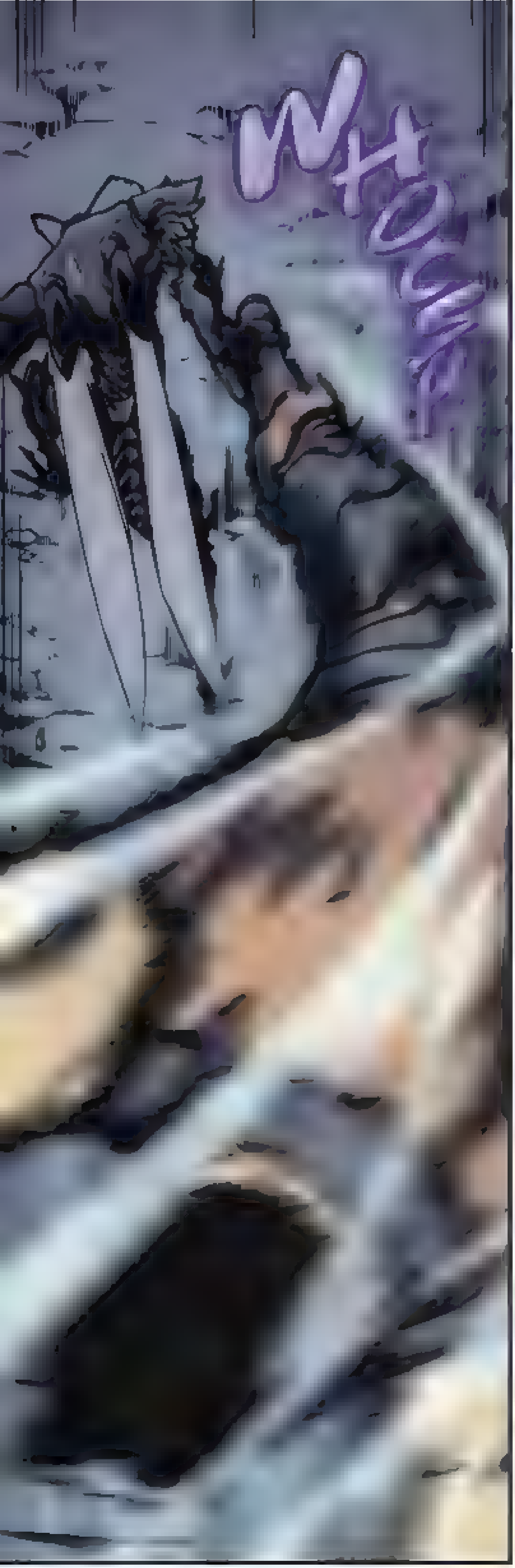
SPL
URT
ROAR!
SHING

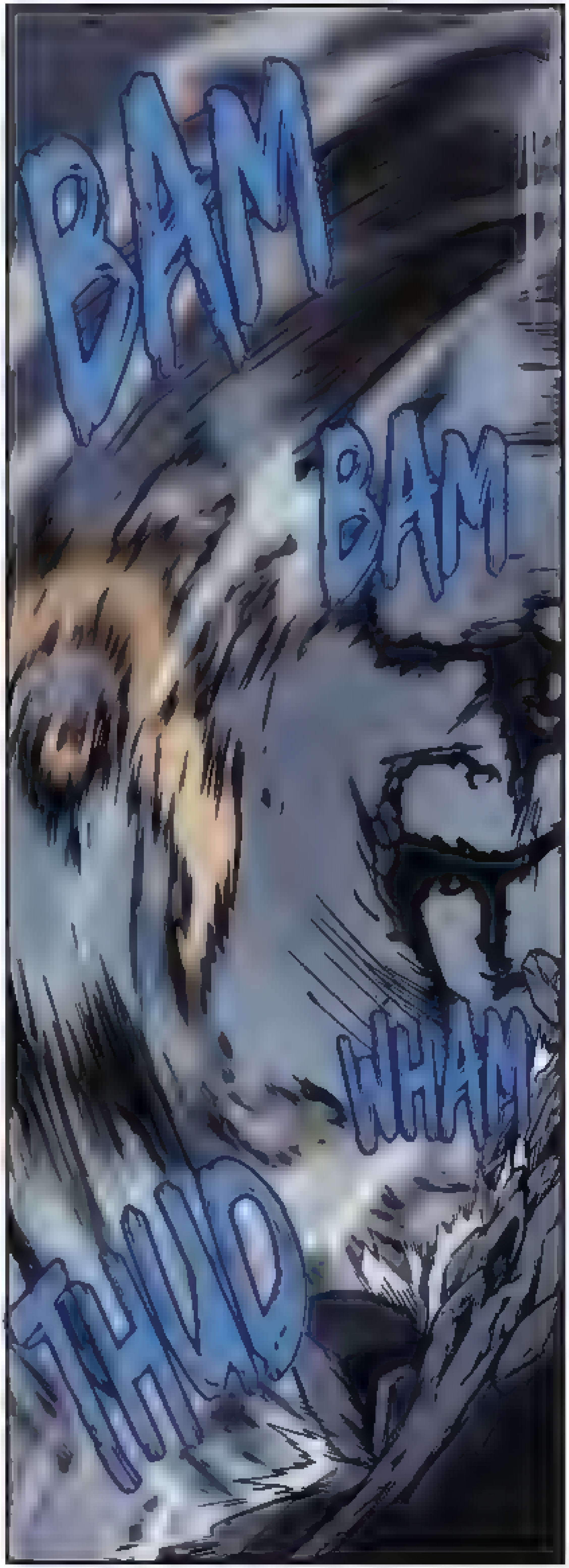

VOOOM


THERE'S NO WAY I CAN MISS FROM THIS DISTANCE!
LEAP

IT... BLOCKED MY ARROW?
CRACK
POW

EVEN SEVERING MY ARMS IS NO PROBLEM...
...AS LONG AS HUNTER BYUNGGU MIN IS HERE!
CAMOUFLAGE: A SELF-DEFENSE SKILL.
SIMILAR TO STEALTH, IT CONCEALS MY PRESENCE.
THE ONE DRAWBACK IS THAT MY MOTIONS ARE LIMITED, BUT THAT'S NOT A BIG PROBLEM FOR A HEALER.
IT CAN'T LOCATE ME EVEN IF IT WANTS ME DEAD!
THE ANT CAN'T BEAT US AS LONG AS I HAVE MY POWER!
GRAB


WHOOMP

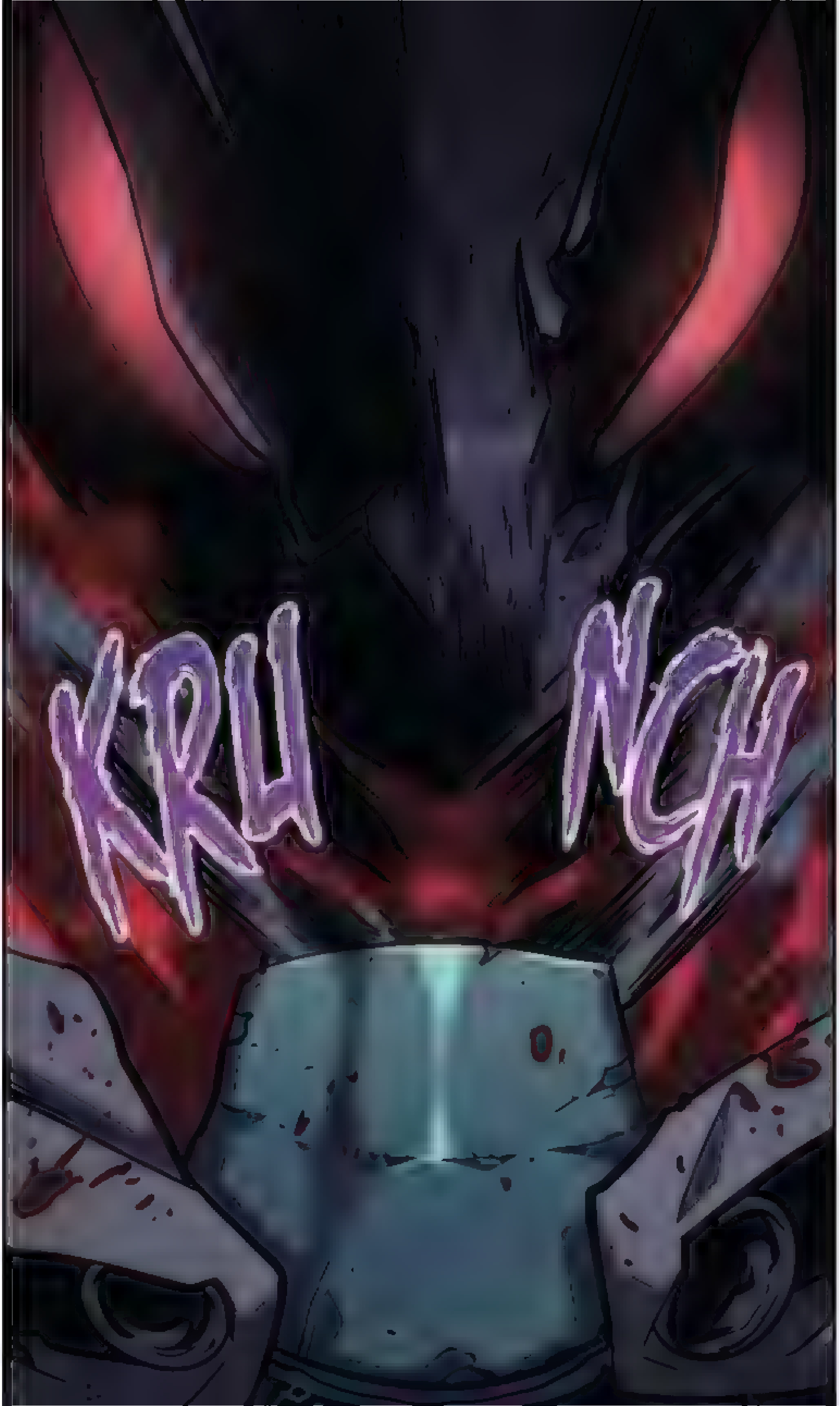

BAM
BAM
WHAM
THUD

VMMM
VWMMM
BUT I'M USING CAMOUFLAGE...
NO WAY?!

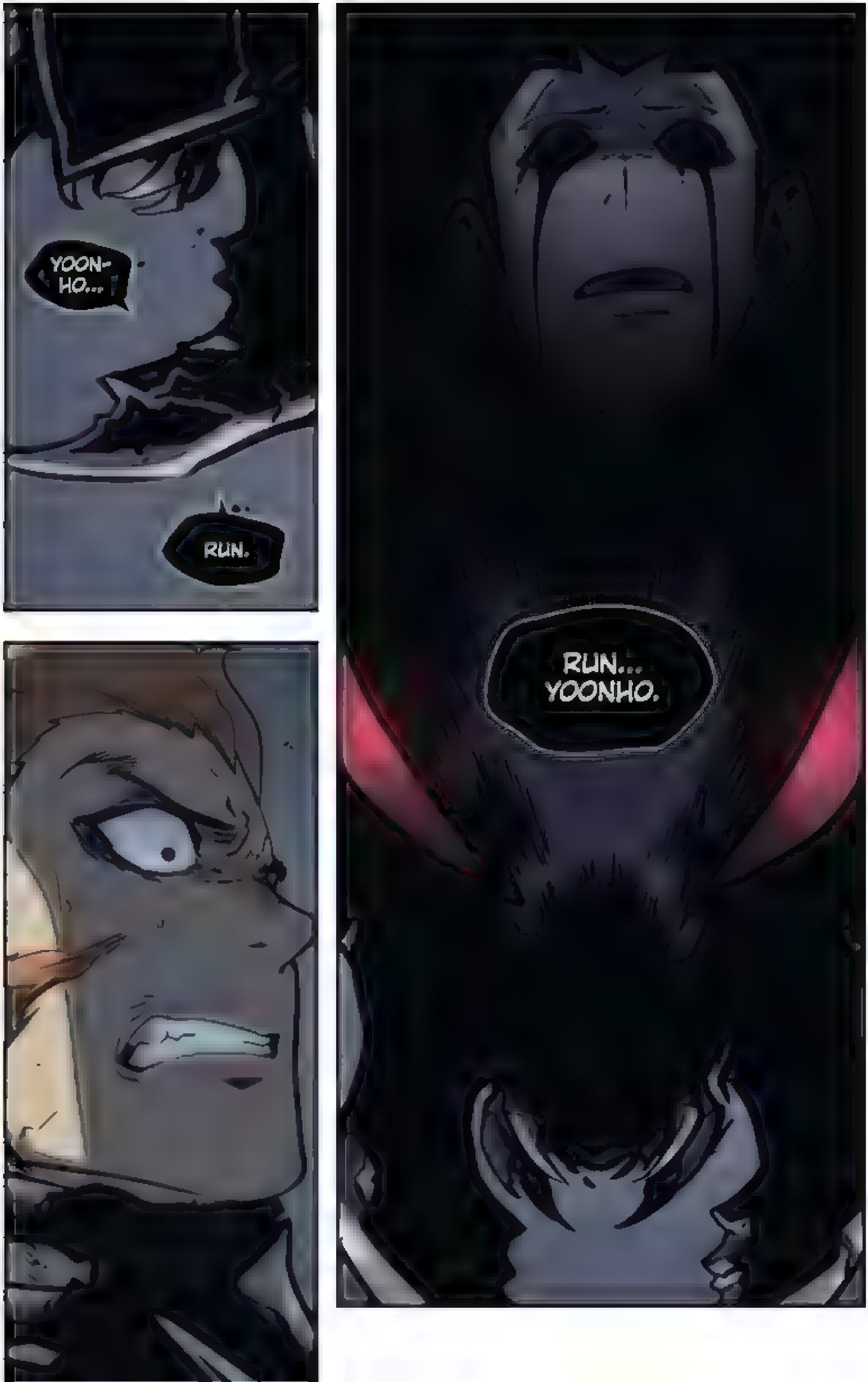
BYUNGGU!!

BYUNGGU
MIN!!

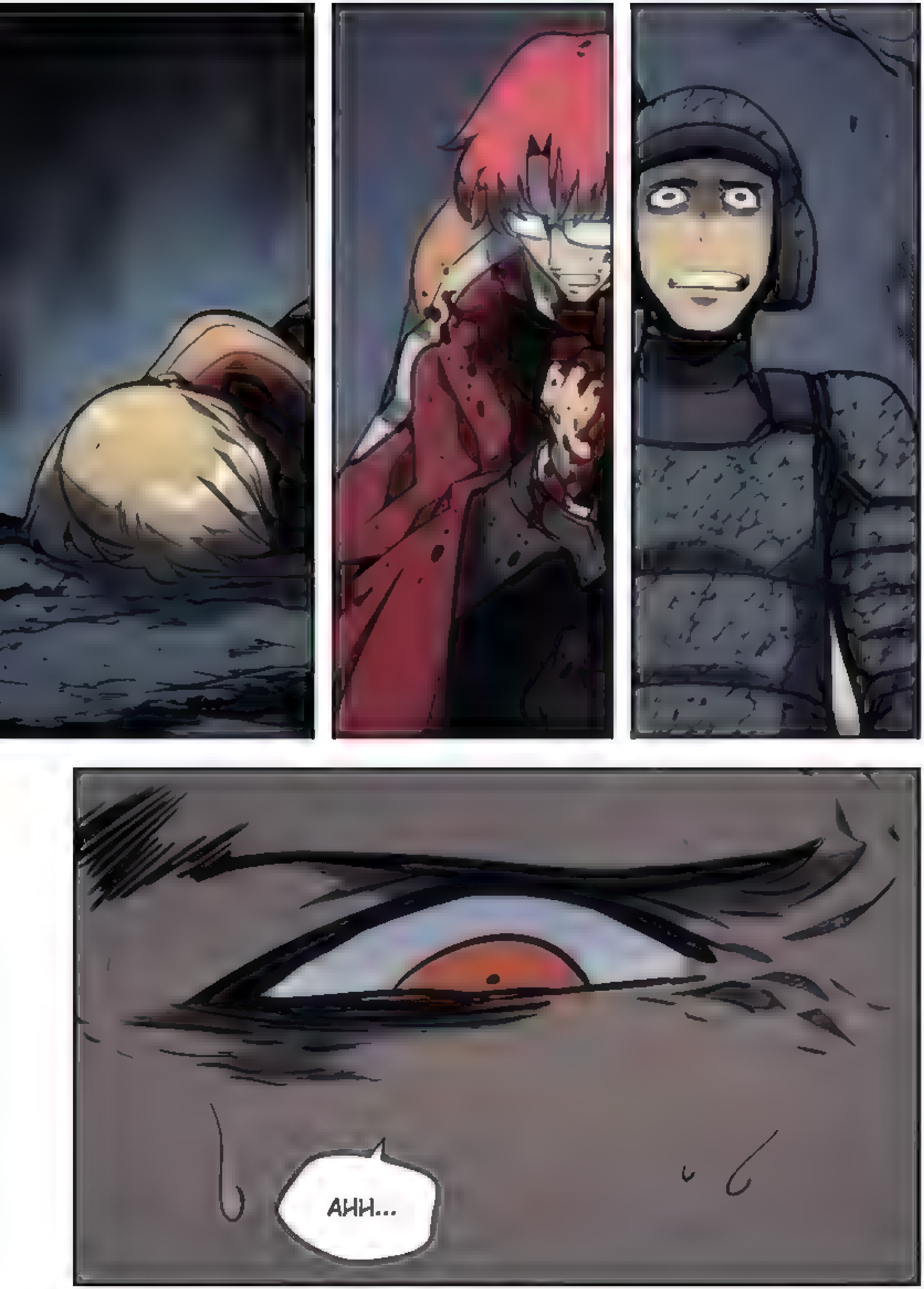
YOONHO...
RUN.

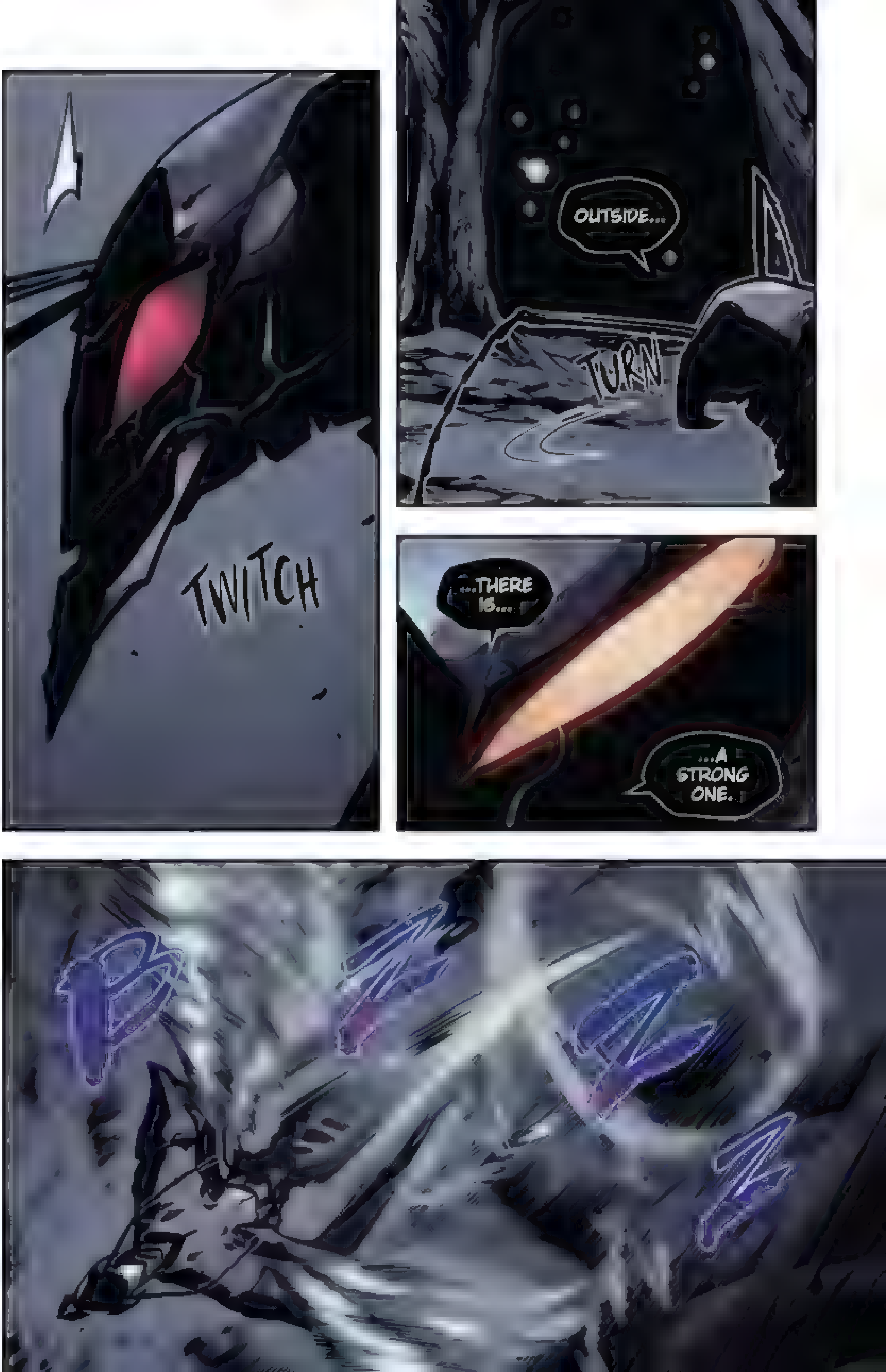

KRUNCH

CHOMP
NOOOOO!!
CHOMP
LEAP
GRAB


YOON-HO...
RUN.
RUN... YOONHO.

YOU BASTARD!
THIS MAGIC BEAST NOT ONLY TAKES ITS VICTIM'S LIFE, BUT ALSO THEIR POWER AND KNOWLEDGE...
YOU ARE...
...WEAK.
...BY SIMPLY CONSUMING THEIR BODY.
WHO IS YOUR KING?
OUR QUEEN... WAS KILLED...
KING...?
KILLING SOLDIERS... IS NOT ENOUGH...


AHH...


TWITCH
OUTSIDE...
TURN
...THERE IS...
...A STRONG ONE.

COUGH, COUGH!
WHUMP
OUTSIDE...?
IS IT GOING FOR RYUJI GOTO...?
THERE'S NO TIME FOR THIS.
SWAY
SWAY
WE NEED TO GET OUT OF HERE BEFORE THAT BASTARD RETURNS...!
!!

DAMN THESE ANTS!!
SKITTER
TAK TAK
TAK
TAK TAK TAK
<Strange.>
<Command says they can't reach both Team Charlie and Team Delta.>
<An issue with the radio signal? They have to be within range.>
<Team Bravo, come in.>

<Bravo is fine.>
<You can't reach Charlie and Delta either?>
<No, sir. Only Team Alpha.>
<Should we go and check on them?>
<We're headed their way. Your team needs to finish there and return to the rendezvous point.>
<Copy that.>
BEEP
<Was there something else?>
<Goto, it's me.>
<...President Matsumoto.>

THE OCEAN NEAR CHINA
<South Korea has spread themselves too thin this time.>
<Even so, there is no way those ants can fly to China.>
<Huh. Seeing Japan's determination to help South Korea, Ryuji Goto must certainly be eager to become a national-level hunter.>
<All the national-level hunters have cleared S-rank gates.>
<Despite his impressive record, Ryuji Goto has never cleared an S-rank gate.>
<Think that's the real reason?>
<What do you mean...?>

<Nothing, nothing. It's just...I feel like it's an excuse.>
<Hmm...>
<Regard-less...>
SHF
<...Ryuji Goto isn't good enough.>
<Really?>

<Well, you'll see what I mean after you witness Zhigang Liu in action.>
<Sounds like you're suddenly a fan of Zhigang Liu, Captain.>
<You could say that.>

<Anyway, I get the feeling...>

<...one side is going to bear the brunt of the price of this battle.>

<Goto?>
<Goto! Answer me!>
<Is something wrong?>
<...There are casualties.>

<Unnecessary losses... Weren't ours only supposed to deal with the mutants?>
<That's right.>
<These hunters were weak. Their lose is of little concern.>
<Such exacting standards. Well... I know you won't have any issues with those mutants.>
<Yes, sir.>
<Is the Korean team dealing with the queen now?>
<That's correct.>

<Looks like a satellite issue has allowed the ants to return to the queen.>
<These variables are annoying but don't present a significant problem.>
<What's the probability of the Korean team surviving?>
<Based on my bout with them, the current team's chances are...>
<...zero percent.>
<Good... Tomorrow's headlines will read: "Japan did its best to help South Korea, but the annihilation of the Korean team forced them to with-draw.">
<"Goto's challenge to become a national-level hunter has failed.">
<And our ultimate goal of wiping out the Korean S-ranks will be successful.>
<Have everyone withdraw.>
<Yes, sir.>

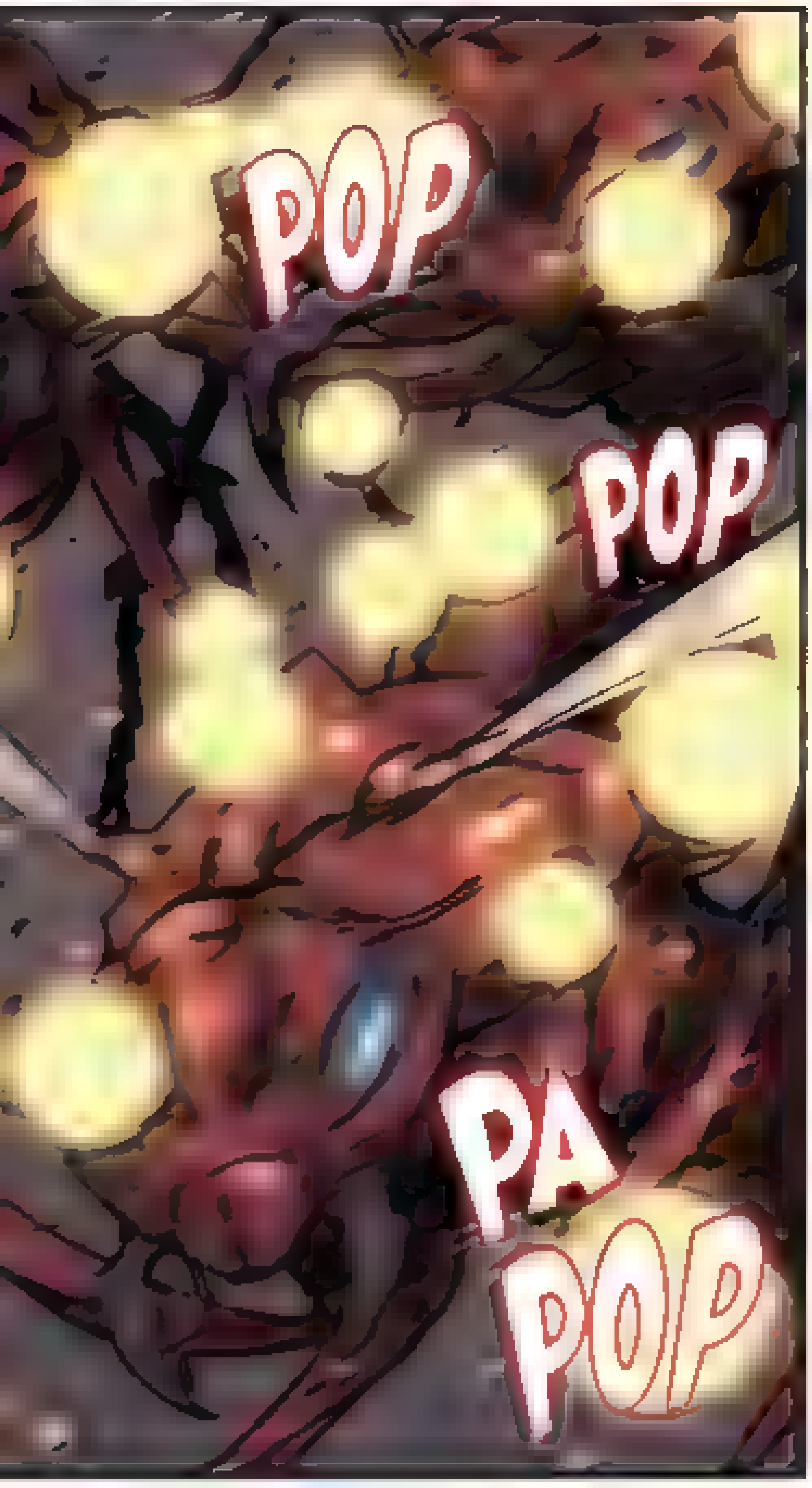
<Everyone, we're with-drawing.>
<Under-stood.>
<Take care of their remai—>
<Eh...?>

SHUNK
<Ishida!!>
<This is no ordinary ant.>
<I will take care of this.>
<Minoru, hurry and join Team Bravo.>
<But...!?>
<This is a powerful foe, and you'll just be in my way.>

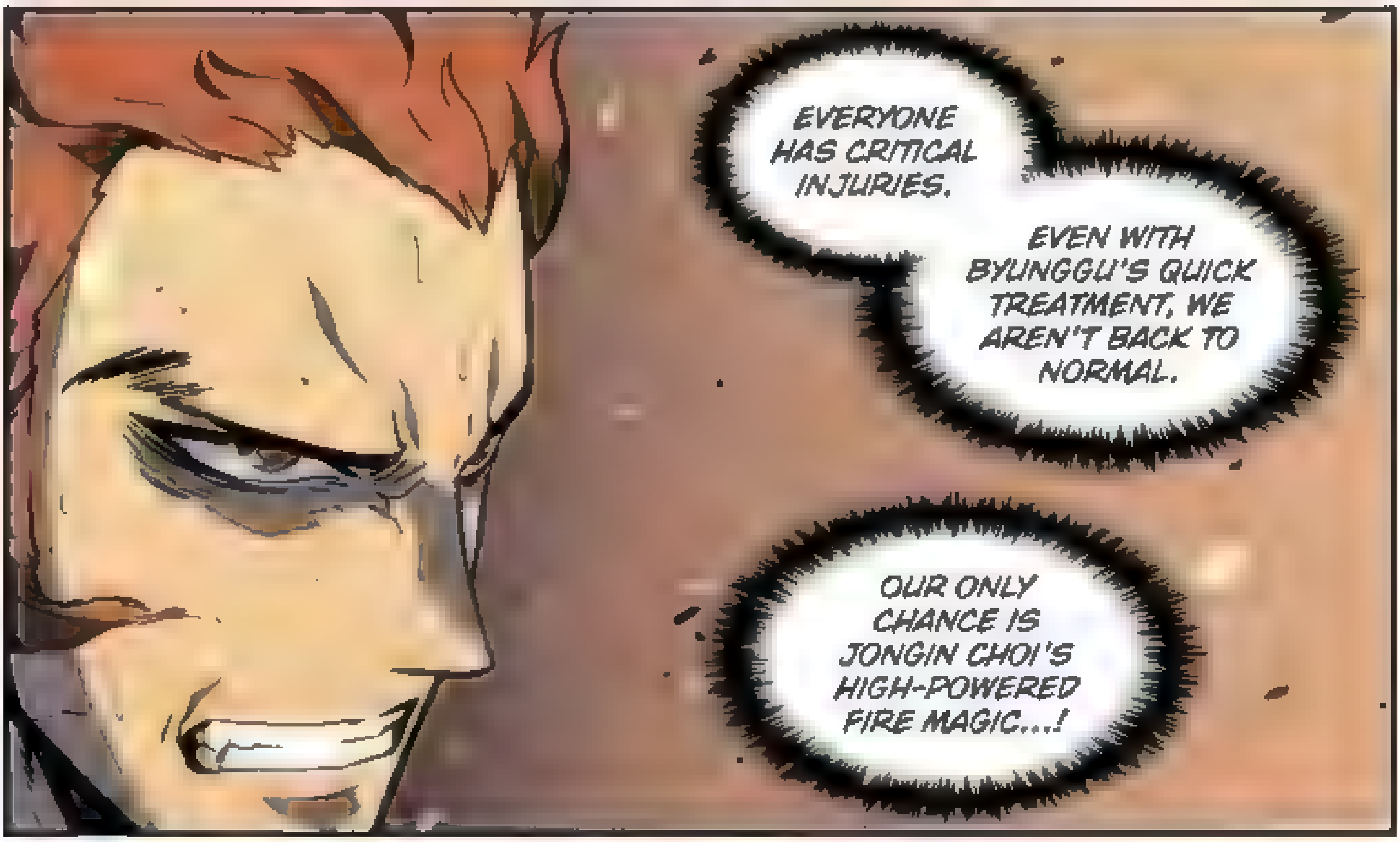
<Ant...
you have quite
a presence.>
<You
are...>
<...the
king?>
<King...>
<A
magic beast...
I can't believe
a mere ant can
speak.>
<Yeah,
I'm the
king.>

<Heh.>
FWOOSH
<What is this magic power...?!>
<I have experi-enced...>
<...a sensation like this just once before.>

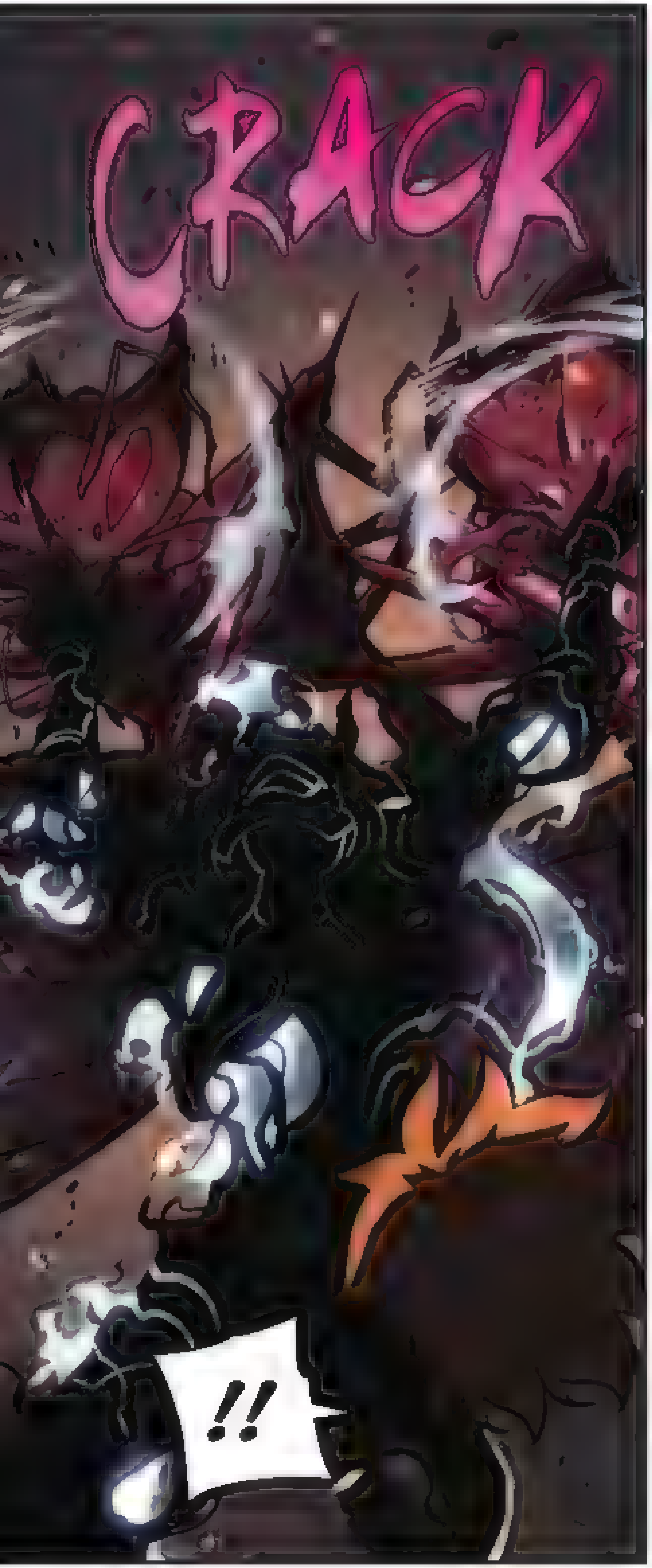
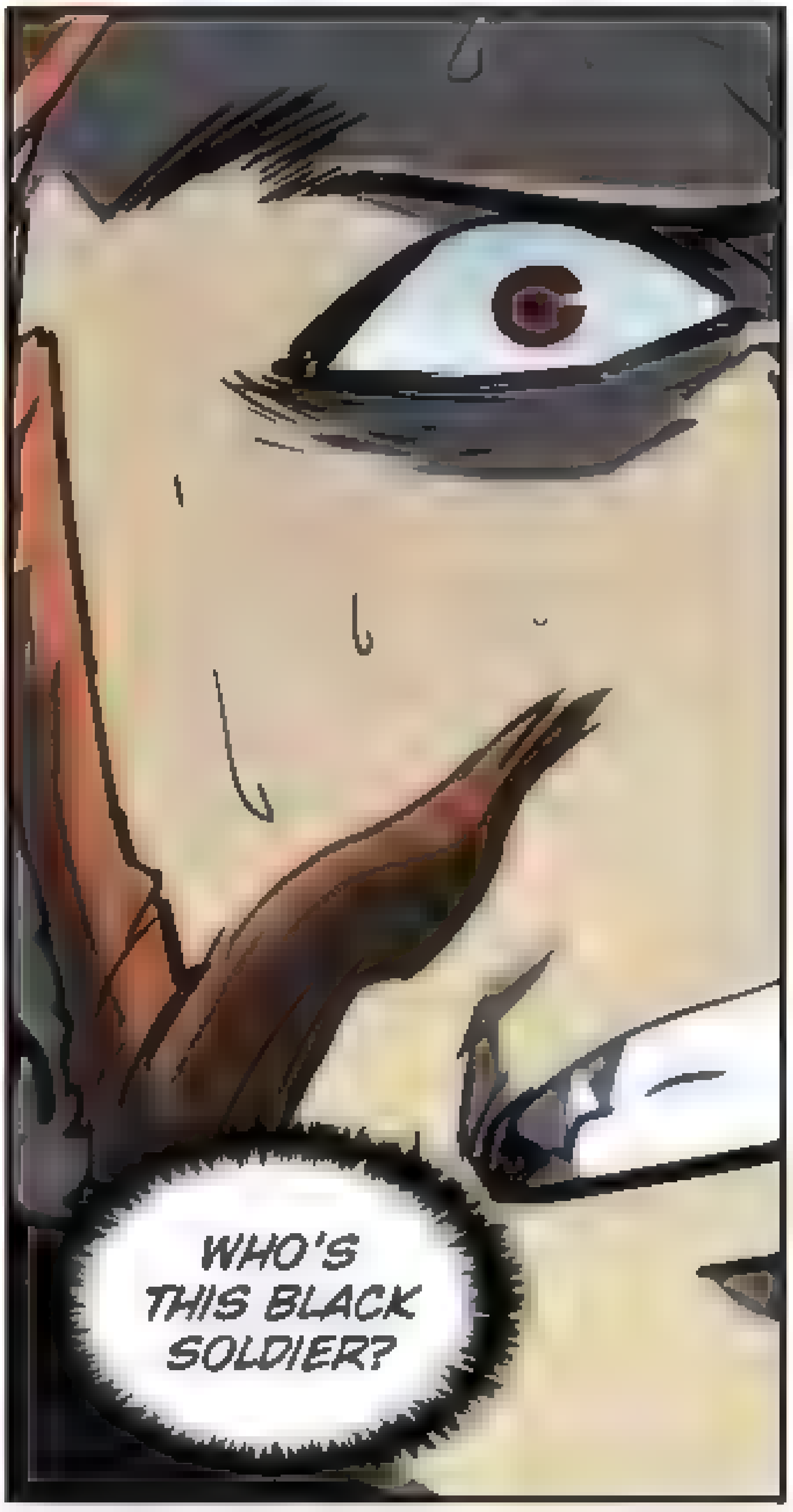
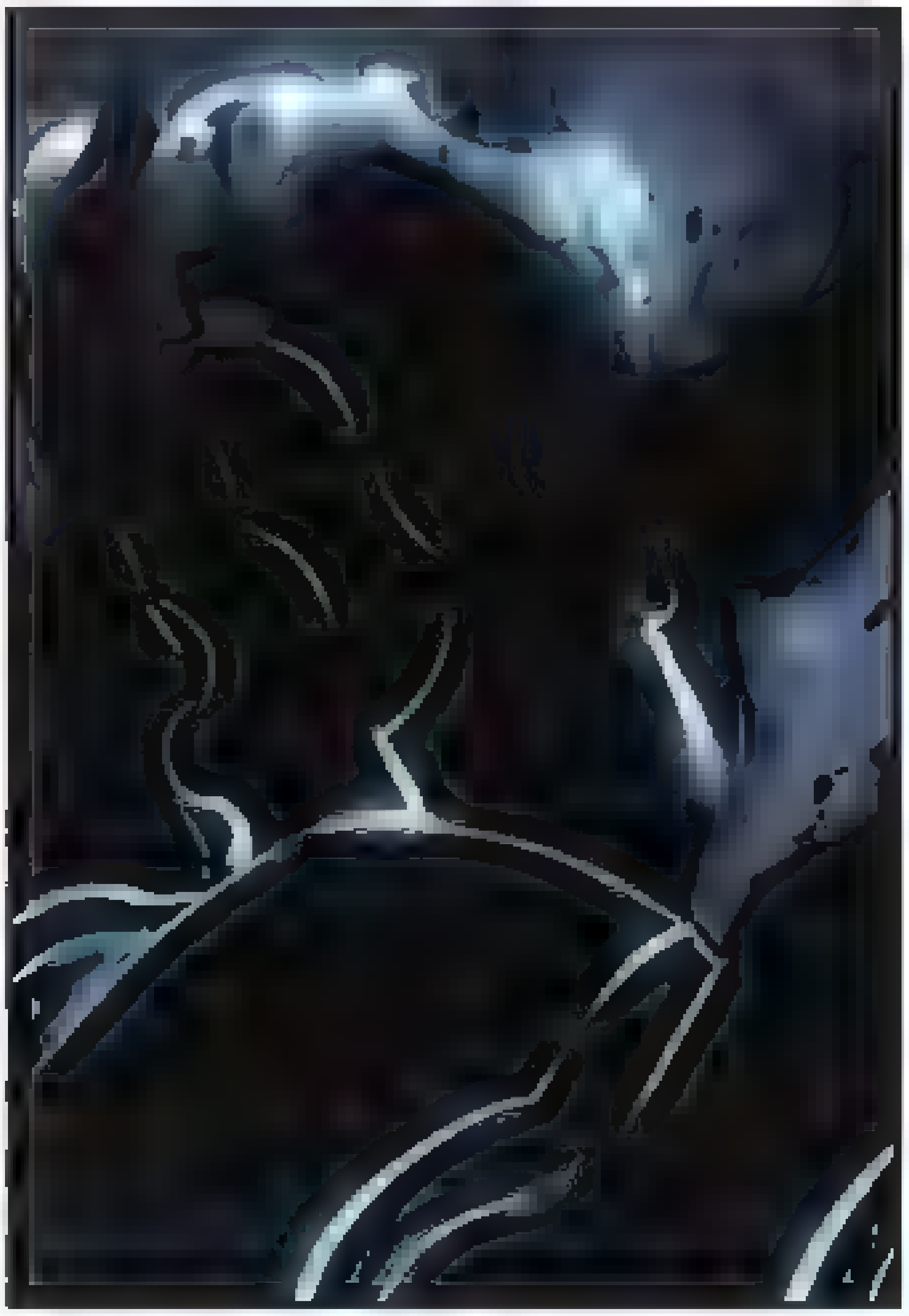
<...When was it?>


POP
POP
PA
POP

PRESIDENT CHOI! CAN'T YOU USE MORE POWER?!
IF I DO, IT WILL BURN UP ALL THE OXYGEN IN HERE!


EVERYONE HAS CRITICAL INJURIES.
EVEN WITH BYUNGGU'S QUICK TREATMENT, WE AREN'T BACK TO NORMAL.
OUR ONLY CHANCE IS JONGIN CHOI'S HIGH-POWERED FIRE MAGIC...!

BOOM
BOOM
IS THIS THE END?
SHOOM


CRACK
!!

WHO'S THIS BLACK SOLDIER?


WHOOSH

EXCHANGE.

CHAPTER 19
King of the Humans

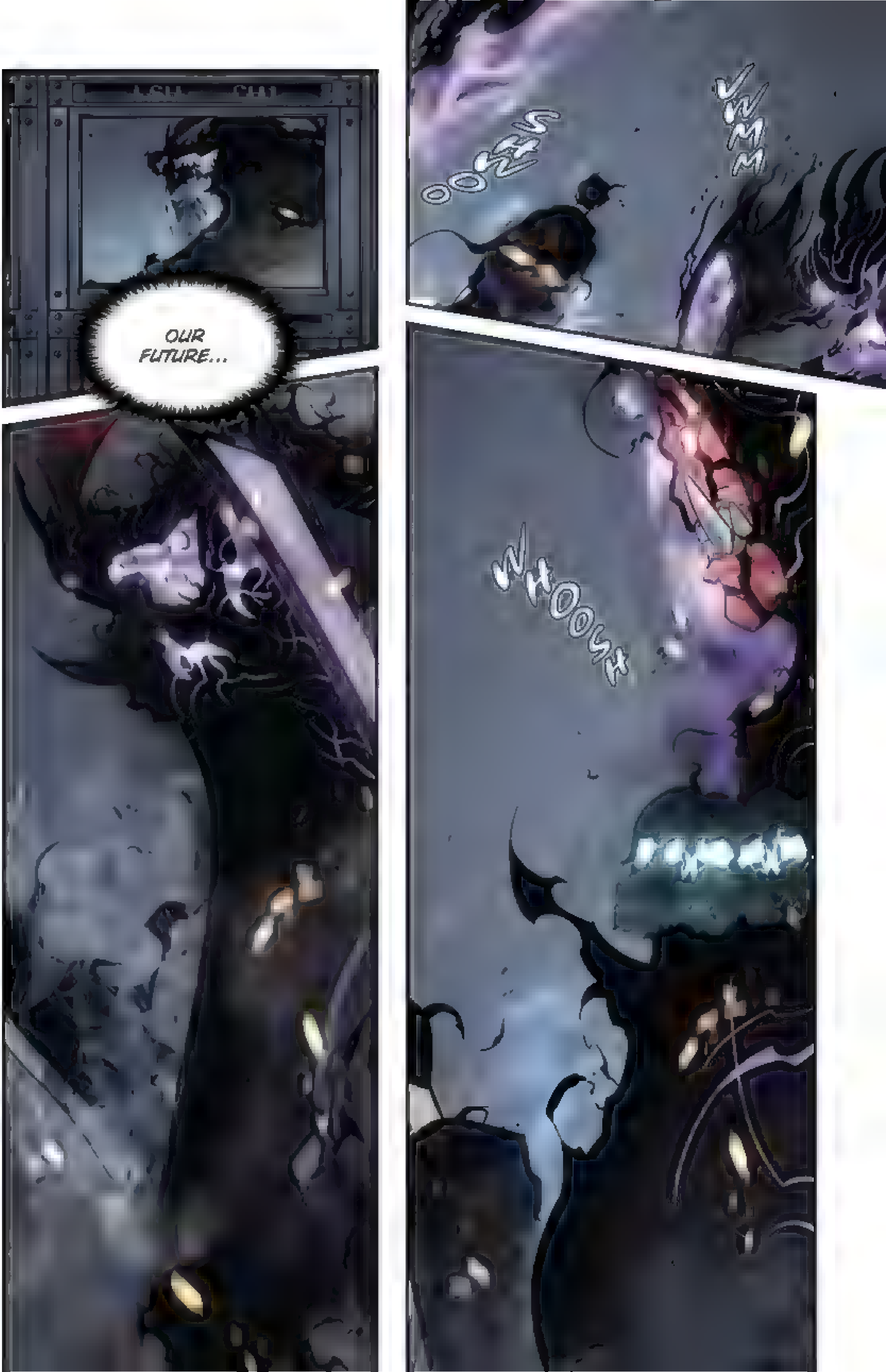
Solo Leveling

UNNH...
BZZZT
I CAN'T BELIEVE THE LAST THING I SAID TO HIM WAS ABOUT WHETHER OR NOT HE'D EATEN DINNER.
IF I'D KNOWN THIS WAS GOING TO HAPPEN, I WOULD'VE TALKED TO HIM MORE.
DAD...
WINCE

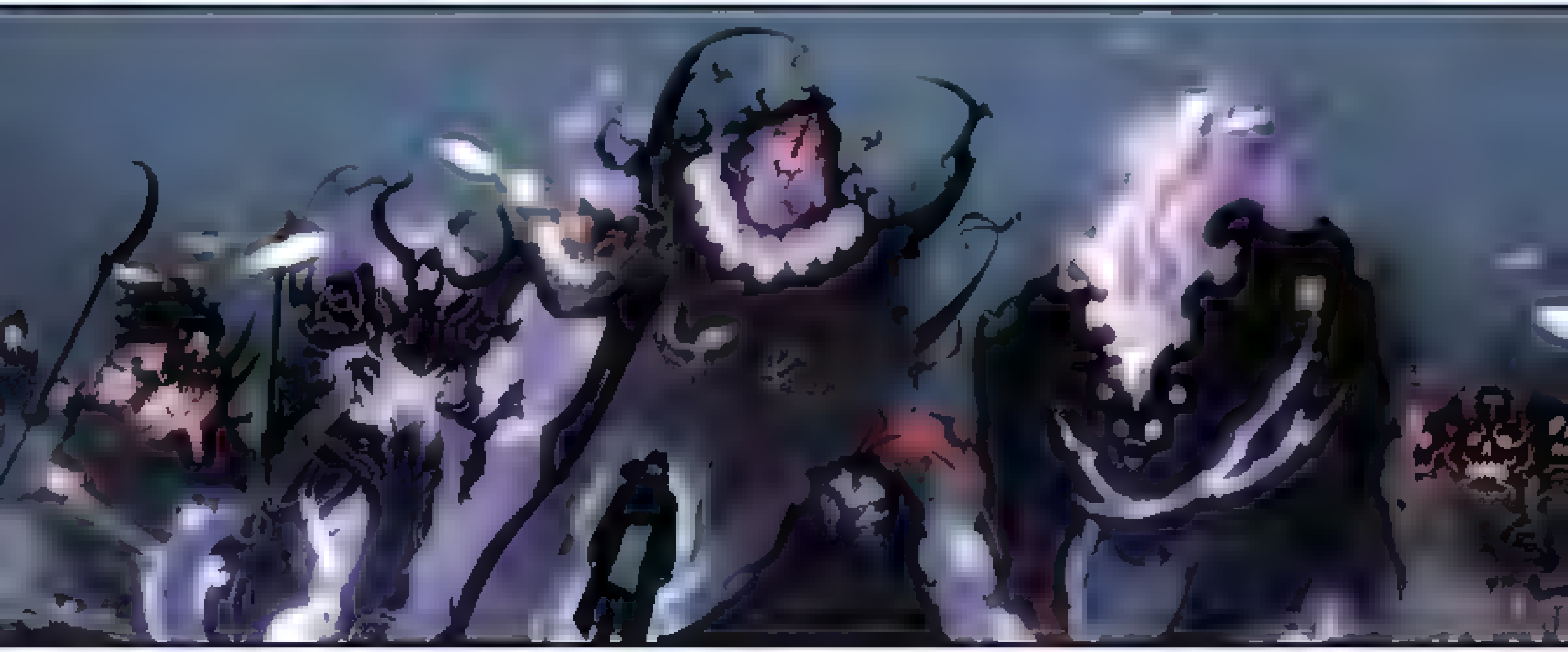
CR
ACK
FSHH

KMS
BECAUSE OF A SINGLE ANT...
...ALL THE S-RANK HUNTERS ARE BEING SOUNDLY DEFEATED?
IT CAME OUT OF NOWHERE...!
SIR, OUR PHONE LINES ARE ABOUT TO OVERLOAD FROM SO MANY VIEWERS CALLING IN!
RIIING
RIIING
RIIING
AND WHAT? DO YOU EXPECT ME TO SHOW THEM THAT DAMN ANT RIPPING HUNTERS APART?!
IT'S OVER... IT'S ALL OVER.
SIR! SOMEONE ELSE JUST APPEARED ON THE SCENE.

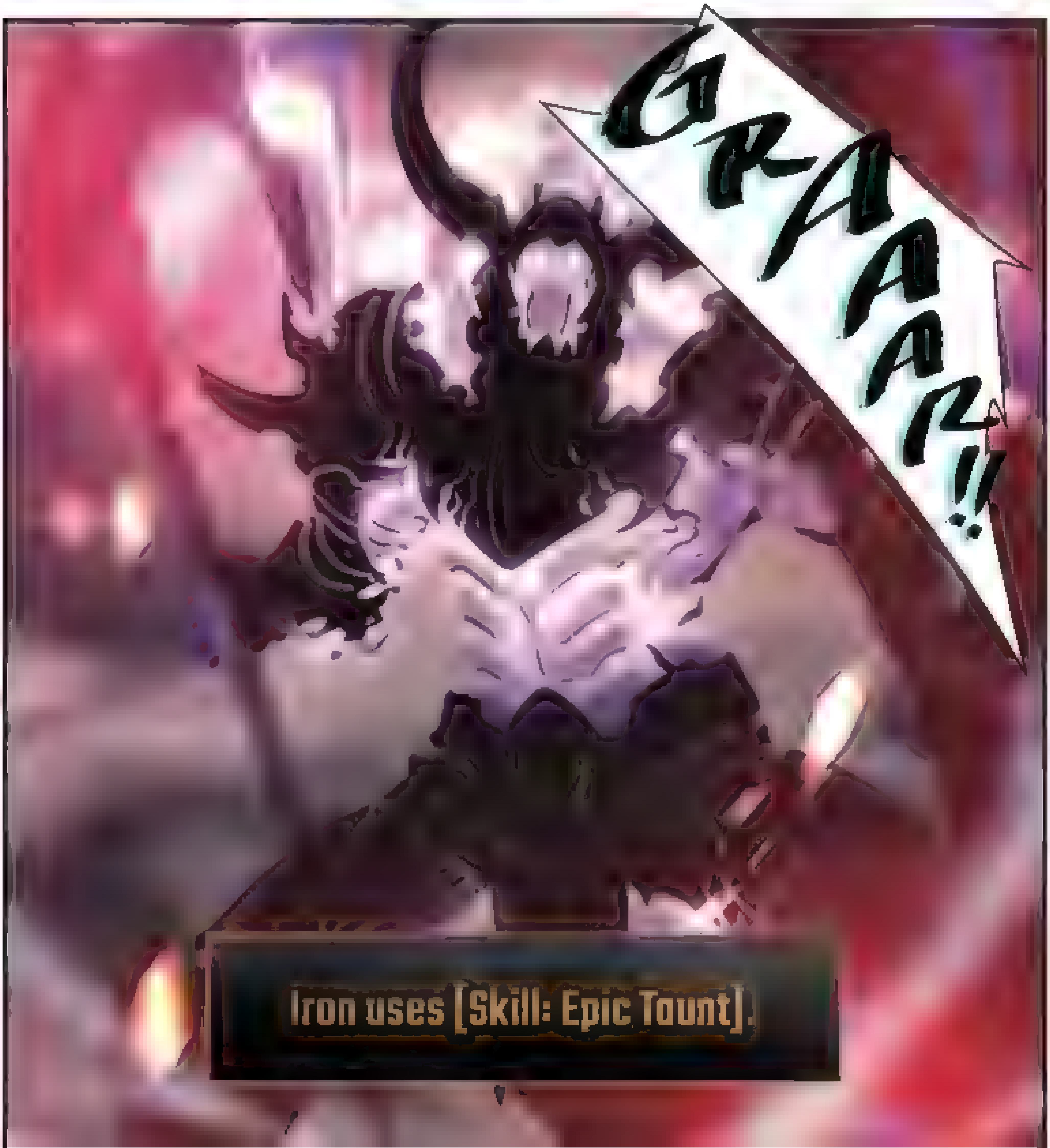
HUNH...? WHAT'RE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
L-LOOK AT THIS.
DEAR GOD... OH LORD!
GET READY TO RESUME THE PROGRAM!
EH? IF WE START BROADCASTING NOW, WE HAVE TO GO LIVE!
IF AN EMERGENCY COMES UP, WE WON'T HAVE A BUFFER TO DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT!
WE'VE ALREADY STOPPED THE BROADCAST ONCE, SO WE HAVE NOTHING TO LOSE ANYMORE.
WE'RE PUTTING EVERYTHING ON THE LINE!
AIR IT. NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS, JUST AIR IT!

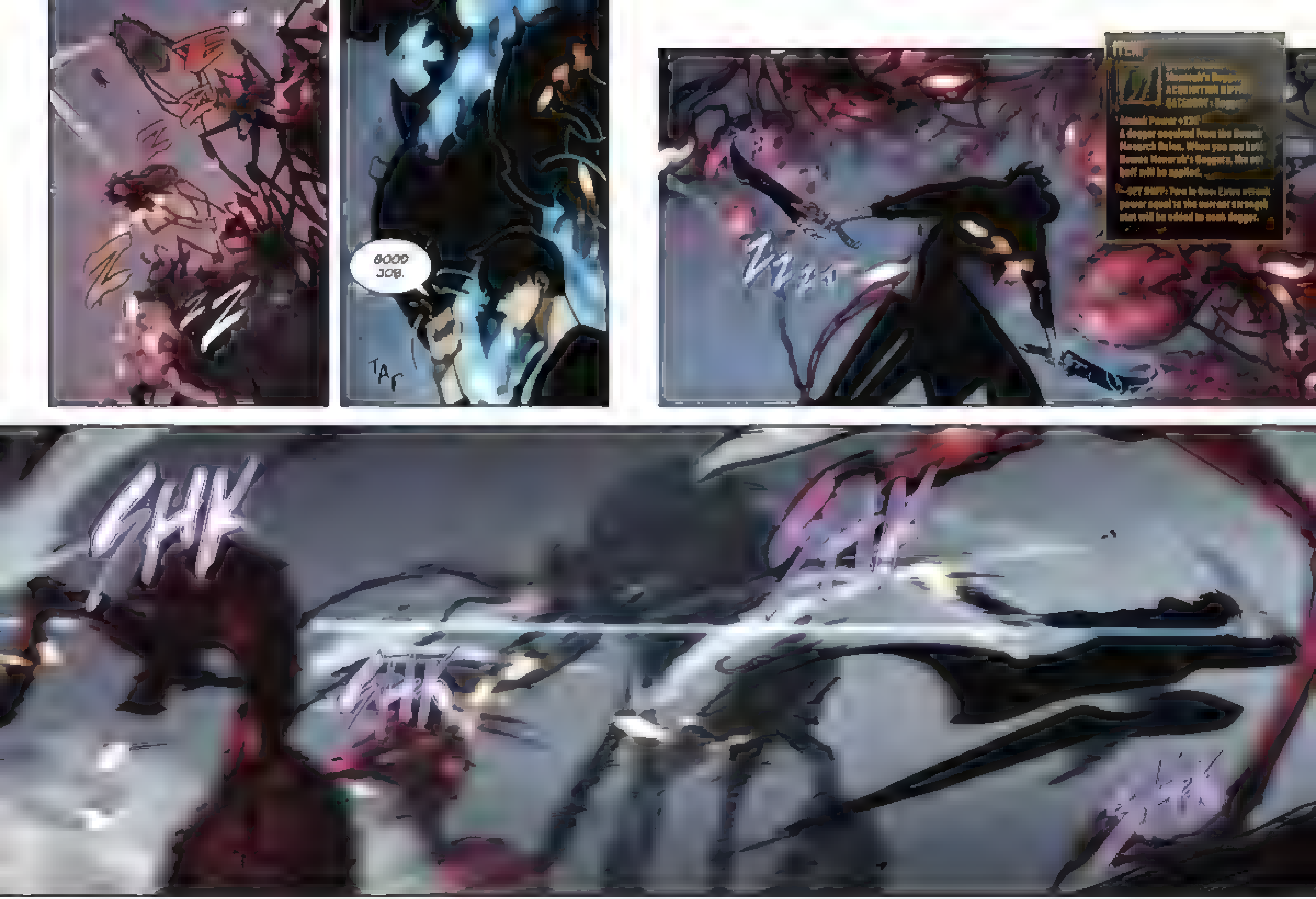

OUR FUTURE...
SWOOO
WHOOSH

...IS IN THAT MAN'S HANDS.
SKILL
Job-exclusive skill
No mana required.
The caster may switch locations with a designated shadow soldier.
Once used, you may activate it again only after a three-hour cooldown period. Wait times can vary depending on skill level.
You may use the skill in 02:59:47.



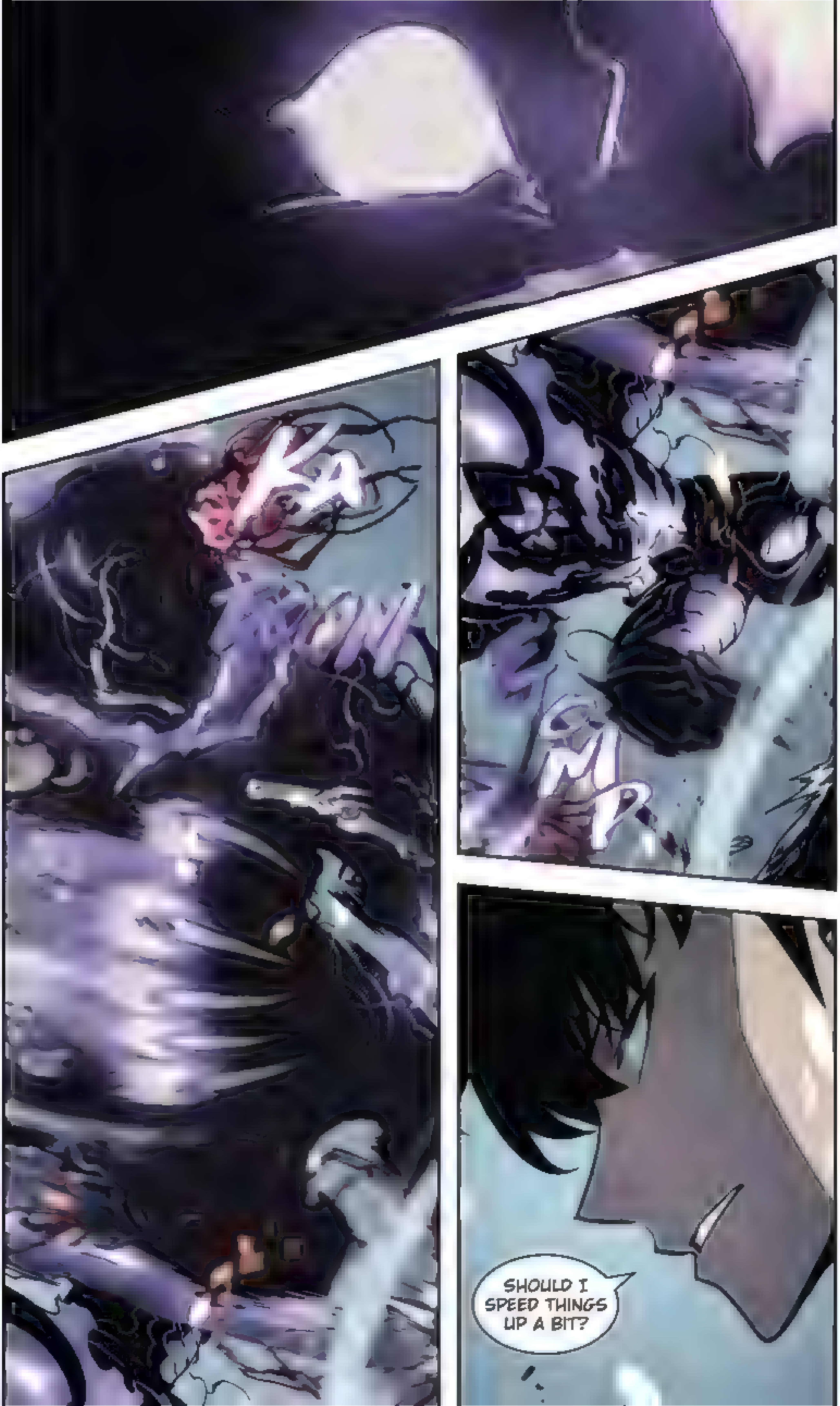
IRON.


GRAAAR!!
Iron uses [Skill: Epic Taunt].


GOOD JOB.

VWOOM
WH-WHAT'S GOING ON?
WHO'S FIGHTING NOW?
MASTER MA... IT'S OKAY NOW.
EVERYTHING WILL BE FINE.

CRACK
SHK
BAM


SHOULD I SPEED THINGS UP A BIT?

ARISE.
WSH
VROOM
WHA—?!
WHAT'S GOING ON?!
D-DID THOSE THINGS COME BACK TO LIFE?!
HEY, REPORT WHAT'S HAPPENING NOW! HURRY!
EVERYONE IN KOREA IS TUNED IN!
UH...I MEAN... I-I DON'T REALLY KNOW WHAT THIS IS...

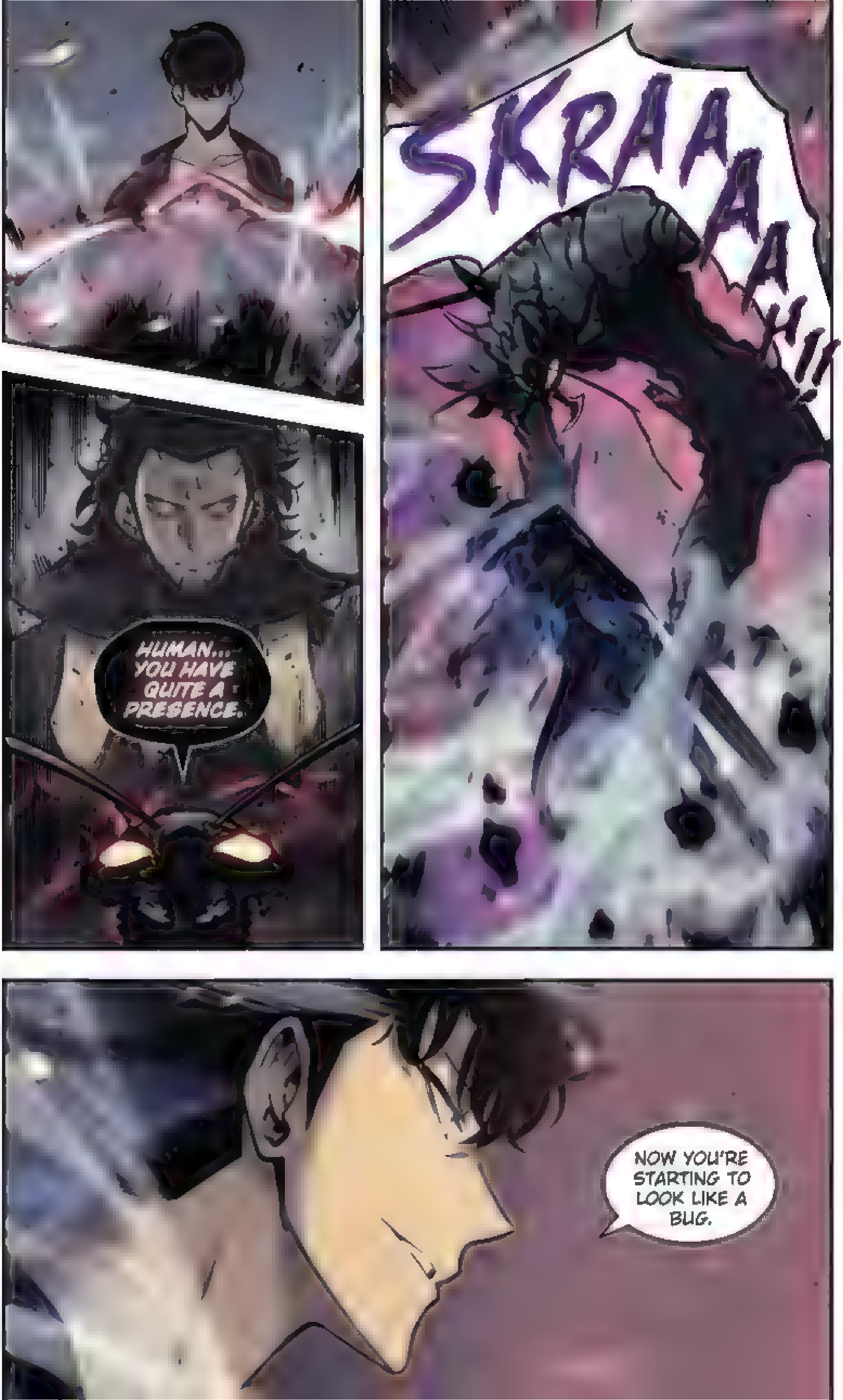
...BUT SOMEHOW THE ANTS ARE ATTACKING ONE ANOTHER!!
CRUNCH
KRAK
KRK
TAK
EVERYONE, PLEASE GATHER AROUND.
OH RIGHT, I CAN'T BUY STUFF FROM THE SHOP...
I'LL EXPLAIN LATER, BUT...
...PLEASE DRINK WHAT I GIVE YOU.

CLINK
BOLT
ALL OUR WOUNDS ARE HEALED...
WHY WON'T HUNTER CHA WAKE UP?
SHE'S SEVERELY INJURED. IT'S BEYOND MY POWER TO HEAL HER.
HER PRESENCE IS GETTING WEAKER.

I THINK I'VE CLEARED THE AREA.
WE NEED TO GET OUT OF HERE BEFORE MORE ANTS ARRIVE.
RIGHT!
STEP
THE KING WAS NOT OUTSIDE.
STEP

HE WAS NOT THE KING.
IS THERE...
...ANOTHER HUMAN CALLED THE KING?
THAT BASTARD IS BACK. THAT MEANS...
COULD IT HAVE ACTUALLY KILLED RYUJI GOTO?

D-DAMN IT...
MASTER MA, PLEASE TAKE CARE OF HUNTER CHA.
HUNTER SUNG!
I WONDERED WHY THE SIGNAL FROM RYUJI GOTO'S SHADOW WAS CUT OFF. I GUESS IT'S BECAUSE OF THIS BEAST.
STEP
STEP
ARE YOU THE KING OF HUMANS?
...SO THE BUG CAN TALK.

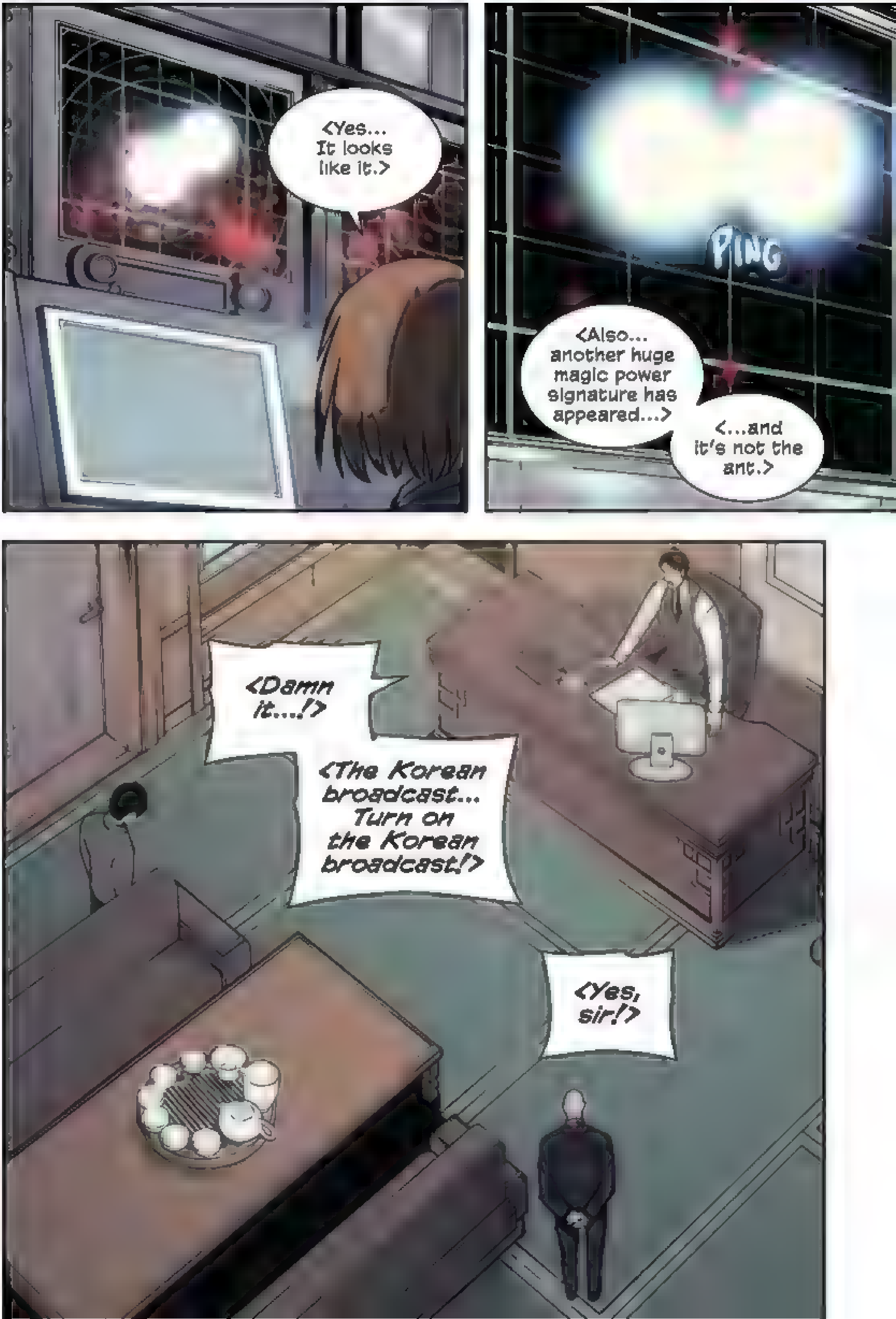

HUMAN... YOU HAVE QUITE A PRESENCE.
SKRAAAAA!!!
NOW YOU'RE STARTING TO LOOK LIKE A BUG.

FIVE MINUTES EARLIER
TAP TAP
CBS
...Buffering.
WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN TO THE HUNTERS?
WHAT WAS THAT ANT JUST NOW?
WHAT? HOW COULD THEY CUT THE FEED RIGHT THEN?!
BRO! WHAT THE HELL IS HAPPENING?!
Ahem... We have breaking news.

Hunter Byunggu Min's death was confirmed by our broadcaster.
The host also relayed that the other hunters at the scene remain in grave danger.
Oh! An unidentified hunter has appeared on the scene just now!
We will return to the live broad-cast shortly.
WHAT?!
NO!!

<Ant...you have quite a presence.>
<You're... the king?>
<Yeah, I'm the king.>
<Heh.>
BEEP
<We lost contact after that.>
<The ant can speak like a human? And it killed Goto?>
<Sir?>

PRESIDENT OF THE HUNTER'S ASSOCIATION OF JAPAN
<Where is this magic beast?>
<It has just returned to the queen's chamber!>
<Is the Korean team still alive?!>


<Yes... It looks like it.>
PING
<Also... another huge magic power signature has appeared...>
<...and it's not the ant.>
<Damn it...!>
<The Korean broadcast... Turn on the Korean broadcast!>
<Yes, sir!>

BAM BAM
BAM BAM
MOM, WHAT'RE YOU DOING?
PEEK
SORRY FOR BANGING LIKE THAT. THE TV SUDDENLY STOPPED WORKING.
WHERE'S JINWOO?
HE SAID HE'D BE BACK SOON AND RUSHED OUT.
BANG
JINAH, I THINK THIS TV IS—
HANG ON, MOM!
SLAM
......?

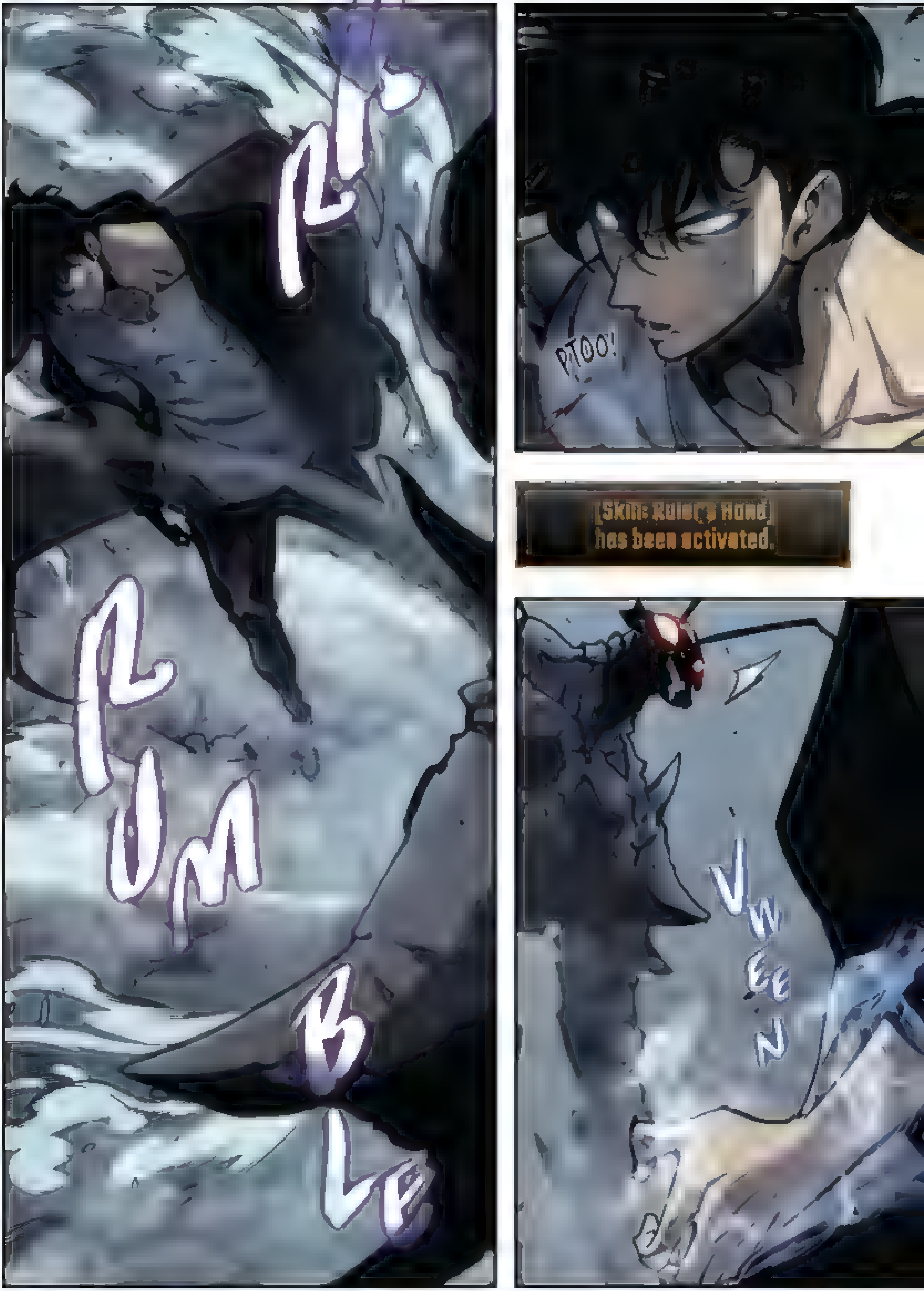
I THINK MY CHILDREN HAVE LOST THEIR MINDS.
......!!
CRACK

IT'S JINWOO!
PRESIDENT GO, PLEASE CALM DOWN!

WHOOSH
KA
CHANG
CRACK

WHOOM
JINWOO IS A MAGE. I KNEW HE WAS TOO CLOSE TO THE MAGIC BEAST...!
IT LOOKS LIKE HE UNDERESTIMATED THE ANT AND TOOK A DIRECT HIT!
WHOOSH

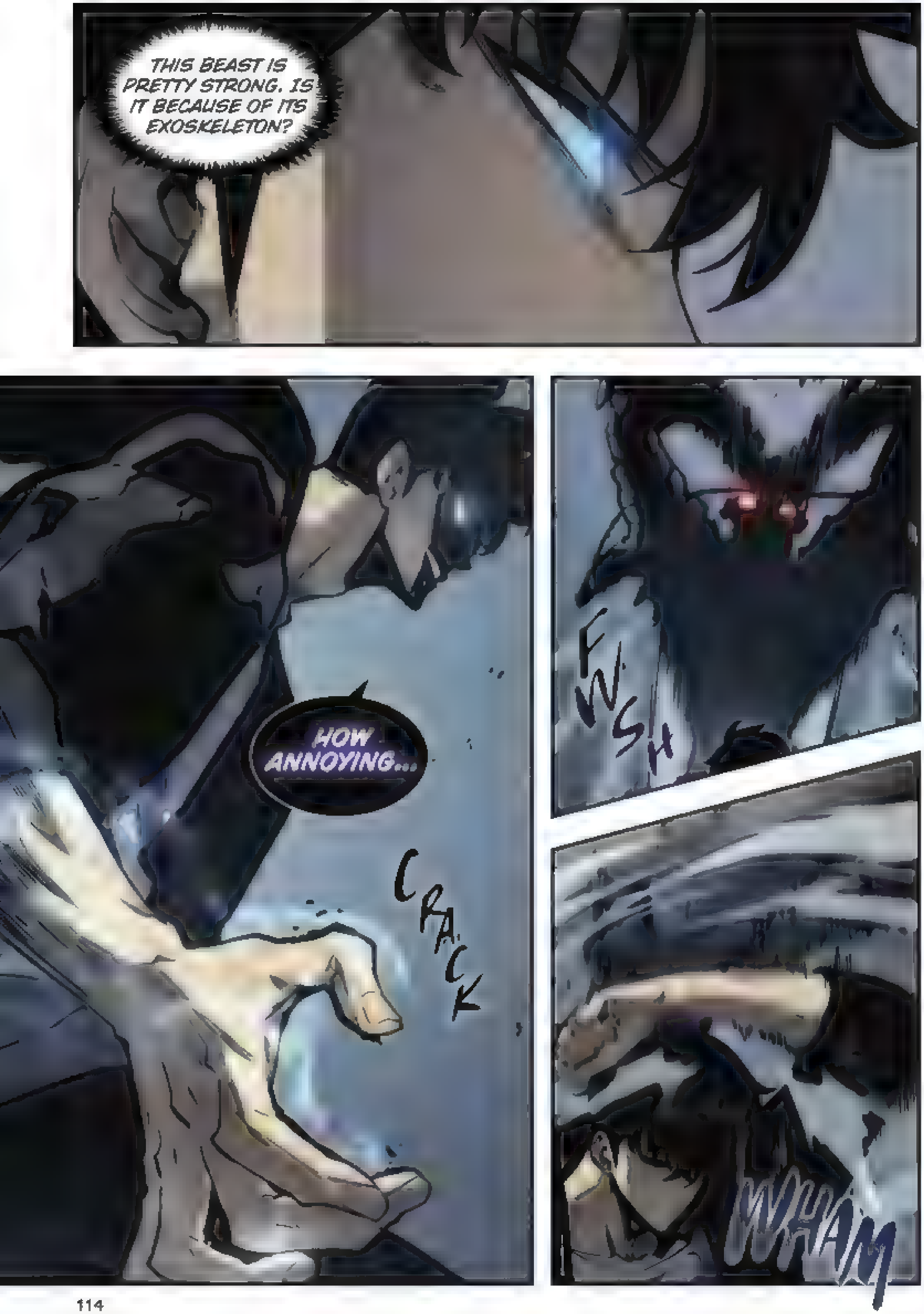
WEAK...
HE DEFINITELY WAS NOT THE KI—
FLINCH


RUMBLE
PTOO!
[Skill: Ruler's Hand] has been activated.
VWEEN

GRRR!
THUD
CLENCH

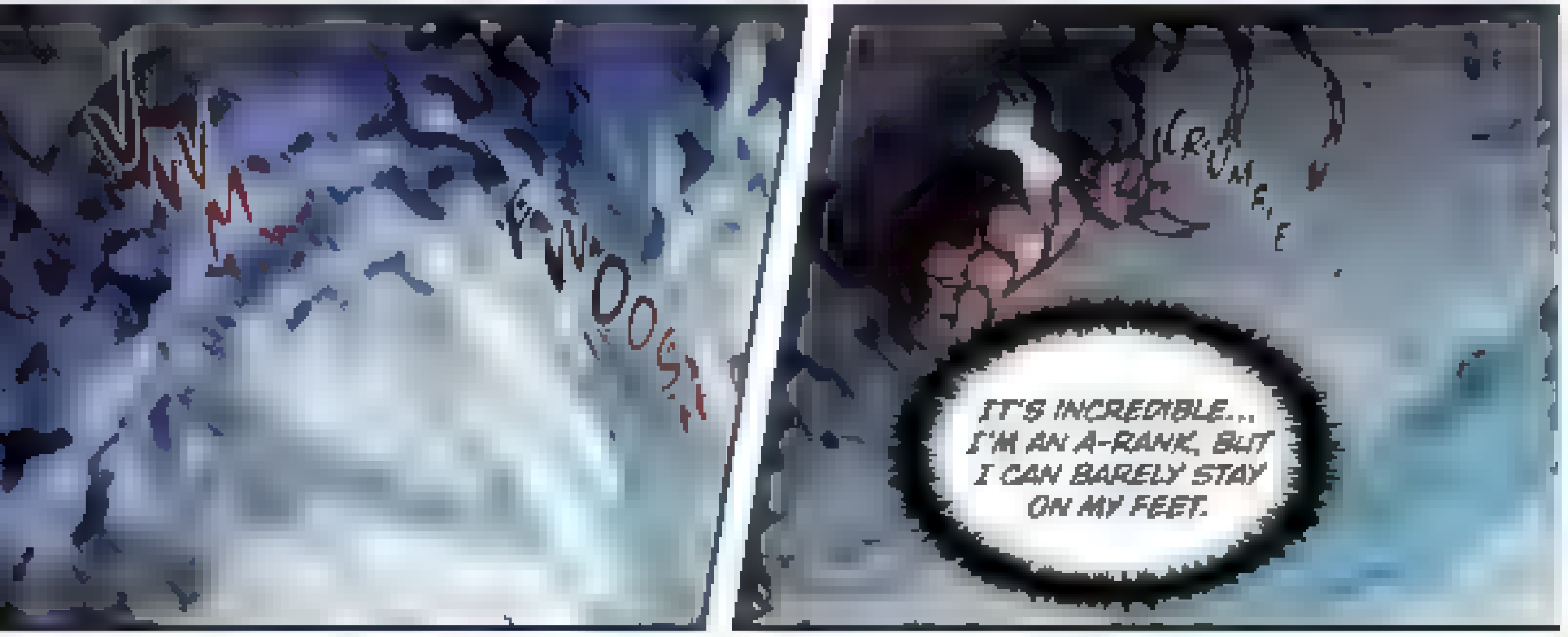
ZOOM
POW

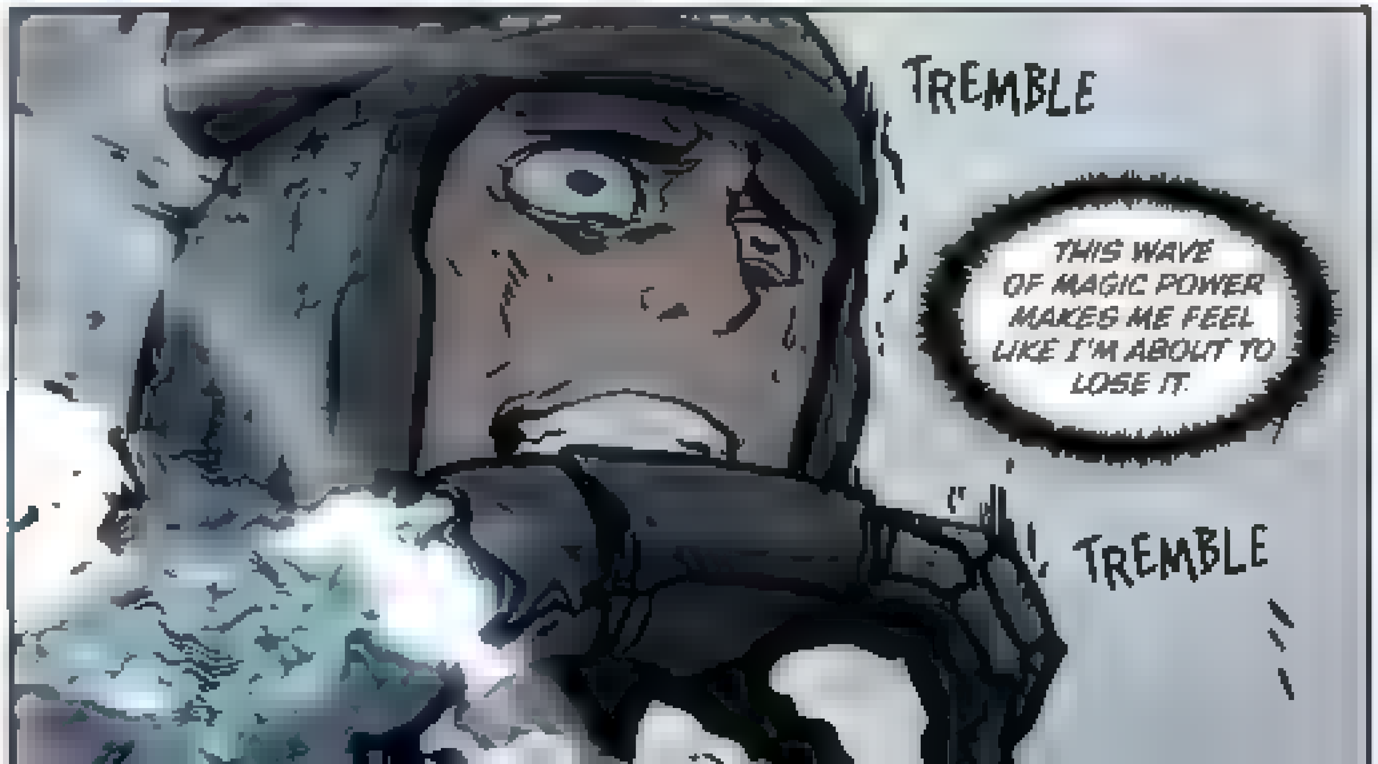
MASTER BAEK... MASTER CHOI...
...ARE YOU CERTAIN THAT HUNTER SUNG...IS A MAGE?
I DIDN'T REALIZE HE WAS THIS POWERFUL...
SKRAAAH!


THIS BEAST IS PRETTY STRONG. IS IT BECAUSE OF ITS EXOSKELETON?
HOW ANNOYING...
CRACK
FWSH
WHAM

BOOM
BOOM
BOOM
BOOM
WHAM

KA
POW


CRUMBLE
IT'S INCREDIBLE... I'M AN A-RANK, BUT I CAN BARELY STAY ON MY FEET.


TREMBLE
THIS WAVE OF MAGIC POWER MAKES ME FEEL LIKE I'M ABOUT TO LOSE IT.
TREMBLE

CRACK
THIS HUMAN...IS OVERPOWERING ME?
KRRK
WHAT...
WHAT THE HELL IS THIS BASTARD?!

CLANG
CRACK
IT'S SPLIT OPEN?
IMPOSSIBLE. HOW COULD HE DO THAT TO MY BODY...?!
ZOOM

WHAM
SCRATCH

WHOOSH
TMP
POISON?
THE KING ANT CONSUMED CONE SNAILS AND ABSORBED A SKILL FROM THEM CALLED PARALYSIS VENOM.
THE MOST LETHAL TOXIN CREATED BY ANY LIVING CREATURE...
...MIXED WITH HIS MAGIC POWER TO CREATE A CONCENTRATED, MORE POTENT VENOM.

YOU'VE GIVEN ME A HARD TIME, HUMAN.
DIE.

RUMBLE
FSHHH
<Minoru, I got a call from Mr. Sukimoto.>
<What happened?>
<Can't defeat it... It's a monster...>
<"S-rank"... That shit doesn't matter...There is no way to measure its power by human standards...>
TREMBLE
TREMBLE
TREMBLE

<Mr. Goto...>
<We...>
<What're you talking about? Have you lost it?!>
<No one can stop it...>
SHOVE
<Hmph. Pathetic.>
<We've got a bigger problem ahead of us...>
<Damn it.>
FSHHHH

CRACK
H-HOW?!
KA
POW
WHUD

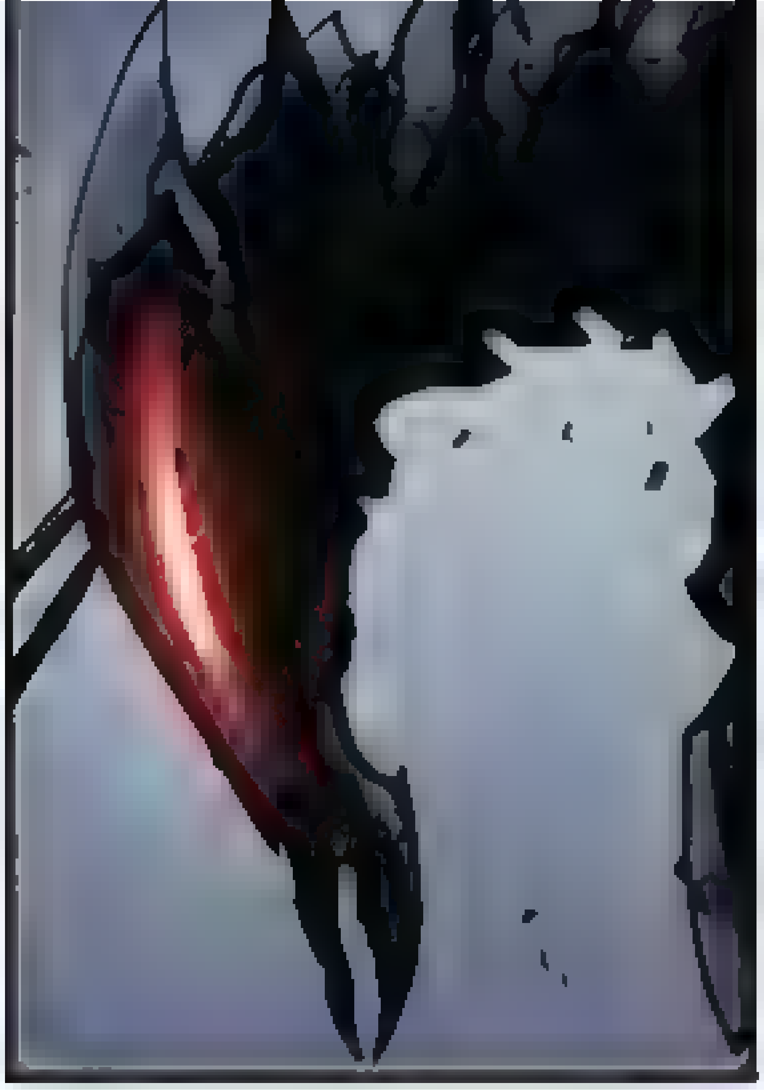
HISSSS!
PING!
Detoxing is complete.
I GUESS THE ANT WAS PRETTY PLEASED WITH ITSELF ABOUT THE POISONING.

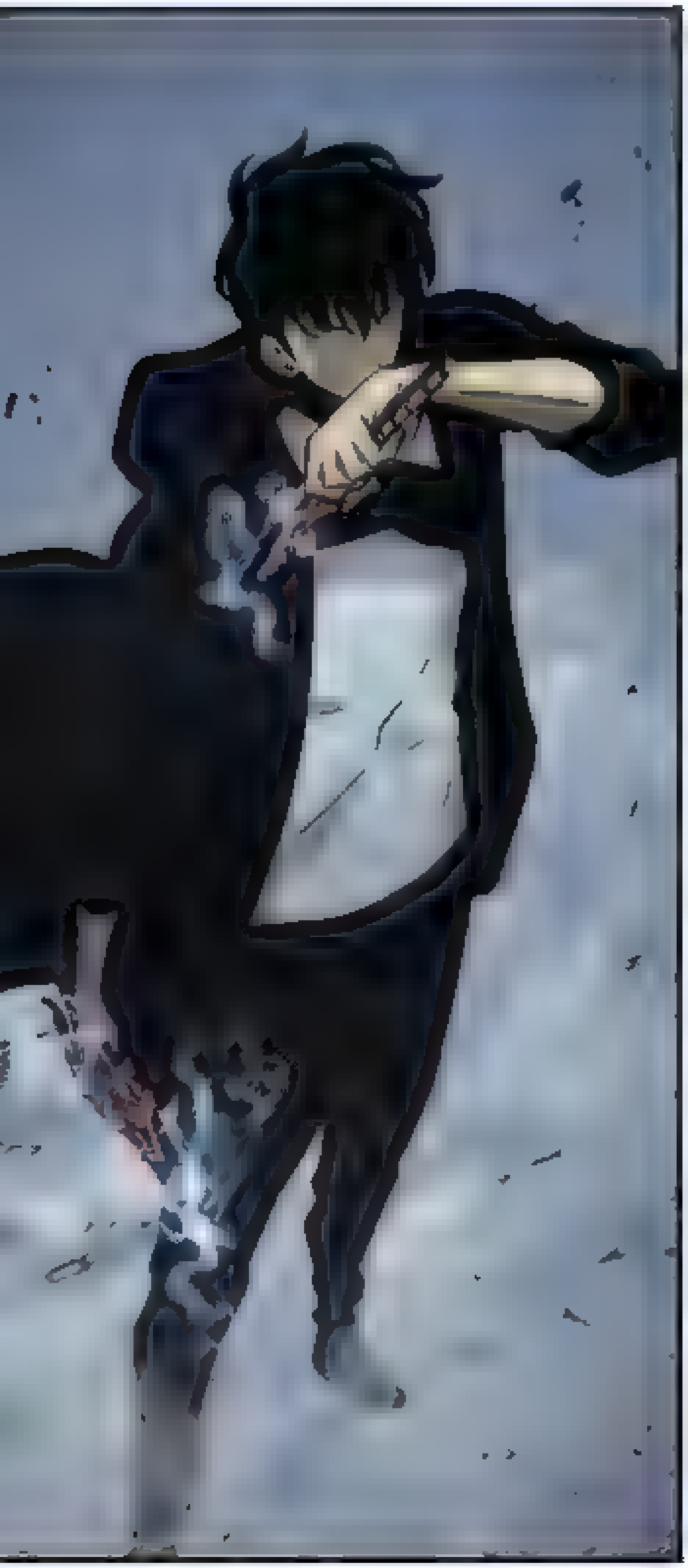
IS THAT DUE TO MY HIGH PERCEPTION STAT?
I CAN SENSE THE MAGIC BEAST'S EMOTIONS.
IT'S DEFINITELY ANXIOUS.
BUT I'M ANXIOUS AS WELL.

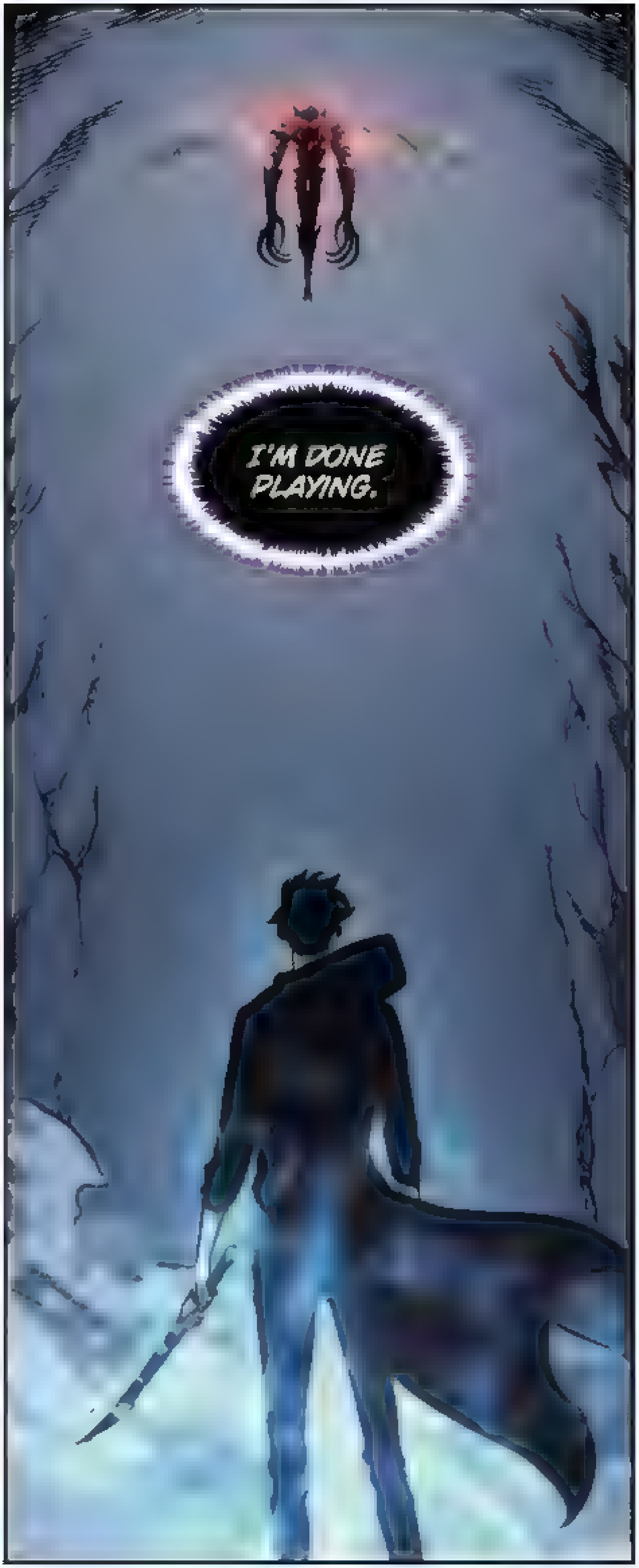
I NEED TO FINISH THIS AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE!
LEAP
SHOOM

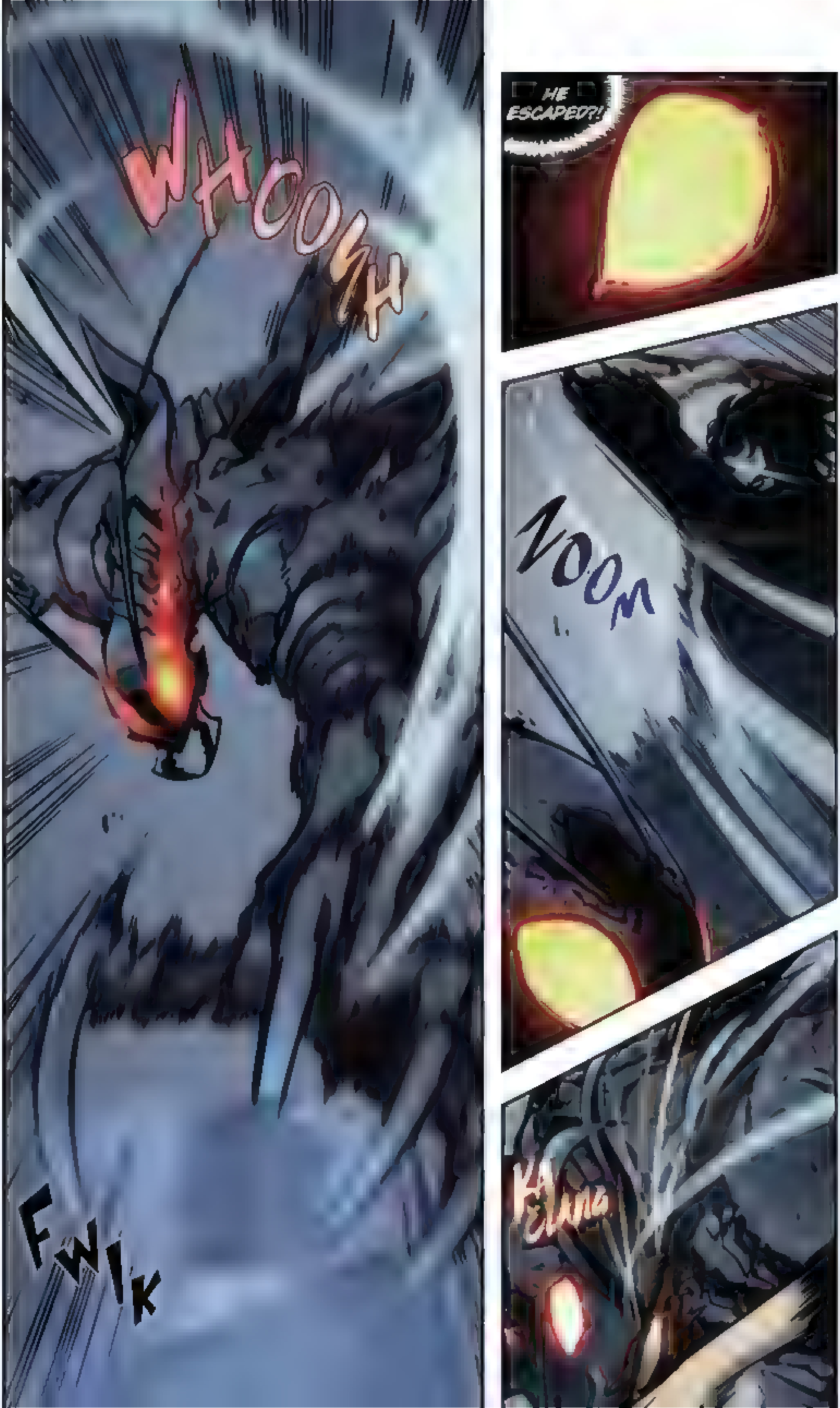
WHA
BAM
RUMBLE
WHERE DID THE ANT GO?!
IT DISAP-PEARED!

VENOM DOESN'T WORK ON THIS HUMAN.
BZZZZ
CHALLENGING HIS STRENGTH WOULD BE A WASTE OF TIME.
CRACK
IF THIS HUMAN'S SPECIALTY IS PHYSICAL STRENGTH, THERE'S NO POINT FACING HIM HEAD-ON.
CRACK
MY TRUE POWER IS SPEED.
I'LL DECREASE MY SIZE AND FOCUS ON MY SPEED.






I'M DONE PLAYING.


WHOOMH
FWIK
HE ESCAPED?!
ZOOM

CLANG
CLANG
KA CLANG
KA
CLANG
THUD
KRAK

CLANG
KA CLANG
CLANG
KLANG

HE'S AS FAST AS I AM... AND...
...HE'S GETTING EVEN FASTER.
HOW CAN THIS BE...?!
THE ANT MIGHT ACTUALLY BE THE SAME LEVEL AS THE DEMON MONARCH. MAYBE EVEN HIGHER.
I'M HOLDING A MORE POWERFUL WEAPON...
...AND I'VE LEVELED UP QUITE A BIT THANKS TO THE REWARDS FOR DEFEATING ENEMIES.

PLUS, THE BEAST'S EXOSKELETON IS VISIBLY DAMAGED.
KRRK
I CAN FINISH THIS!
CLANG
KA
CLANG
KA
CLANG
IT'S TIME.
[Skill: Fatal Strike] has been activated.

SHK
SHK
upgraded to its ultimate
version, [Skill: Mutilation].
UPGRADE?
"MUTILA-
TION"...
OOM
WHERE DO YOU THINK YOU'RE GOING...?
ZING

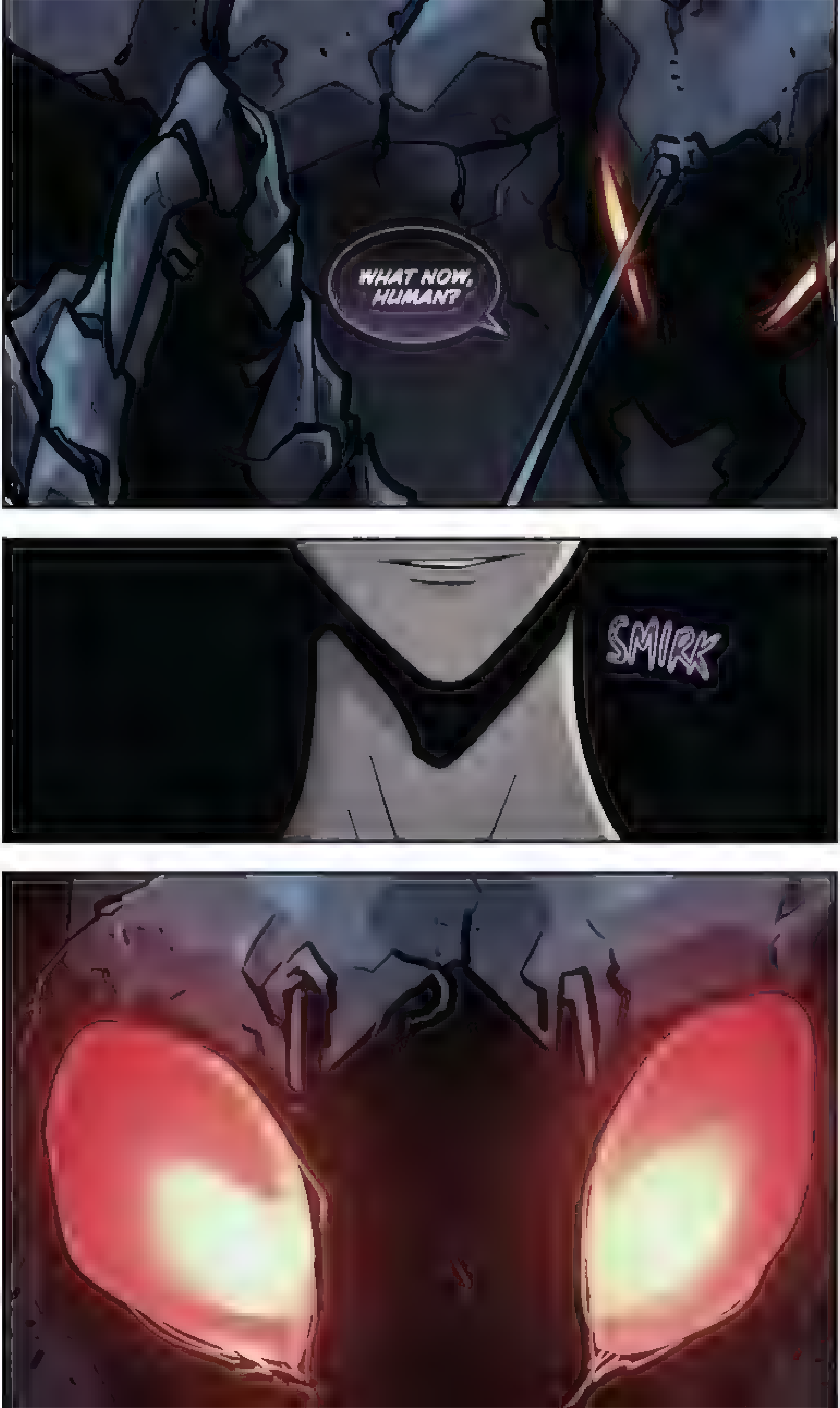
[Skill: Mutilation]
has been activated.
SHK
SHK
SHK
NOT BAD,
HUH?

SHK SHK
[Skill: Mutilation] has been activated.
SHK
SHK
SHK
SHHK

FLAP
SKRAH!

TAK
DO I HAVE ANY ADVANTAGE OVER THE HUMAN?
CRACK
YES.
I DO.
SKRAAAAH!

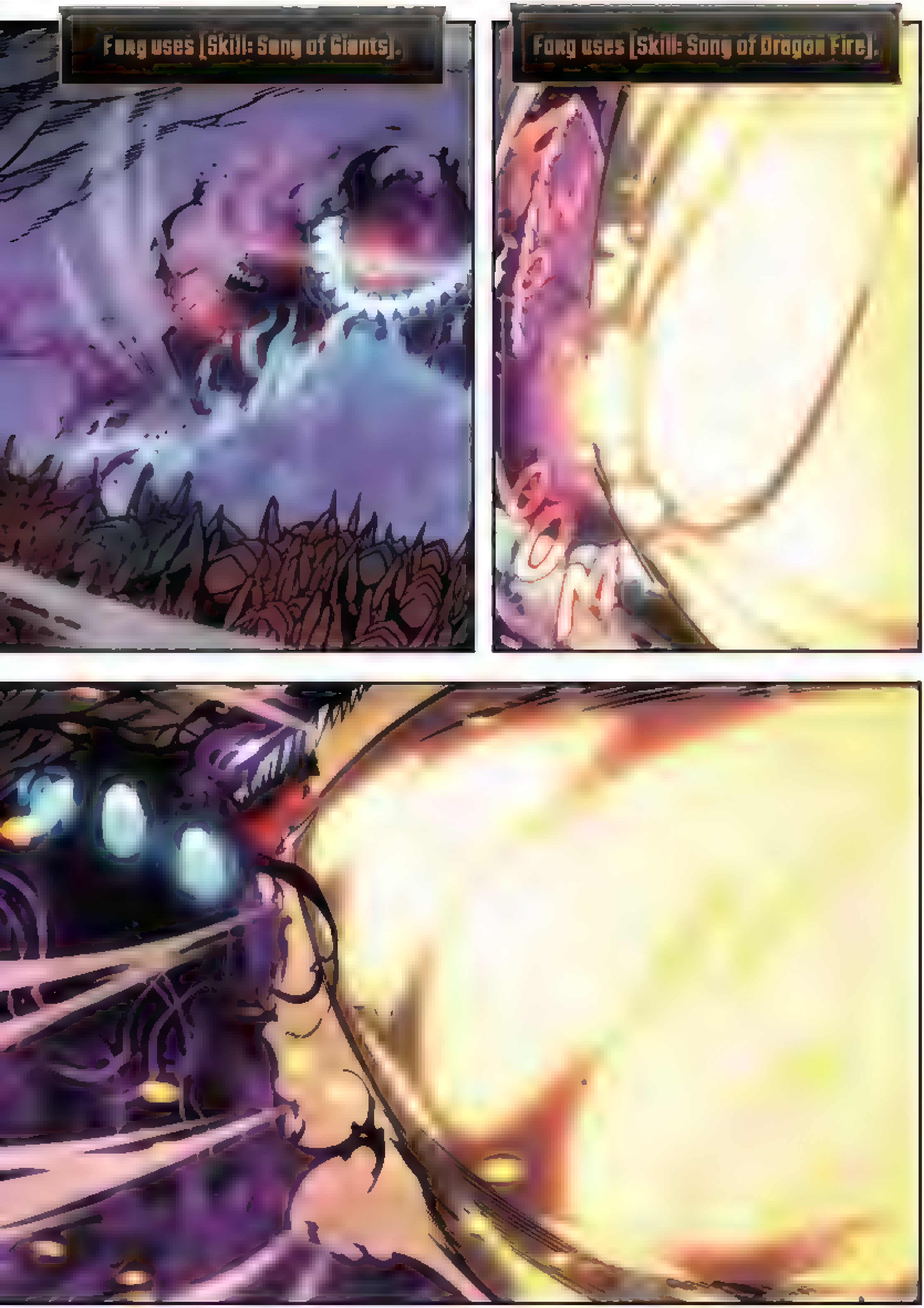
SKT
SKT


WHAT NOW, HUMAN?
SMIRK

VWOOOOM
GO.

THUD
THUD
SHHK

COME FORTH.
VOOM
ONLY TARGET THE ANTS. IF SO MUCH AS A SPARK TOUCHES A HUMAN, I WON'T SUMMON YOU EVER AGAIN.


Fang uses [Skill: Song of Giants].
Fang uses [Skill: Song of Dragon Fire].

BOOM
TH-THAT'S A MINION...?
YOU'RE HONESTLY TELLING ME THAT'S A MINION?
NO, THAT DOESN'T LOOK LIKE A MINION IN ANY WAY...

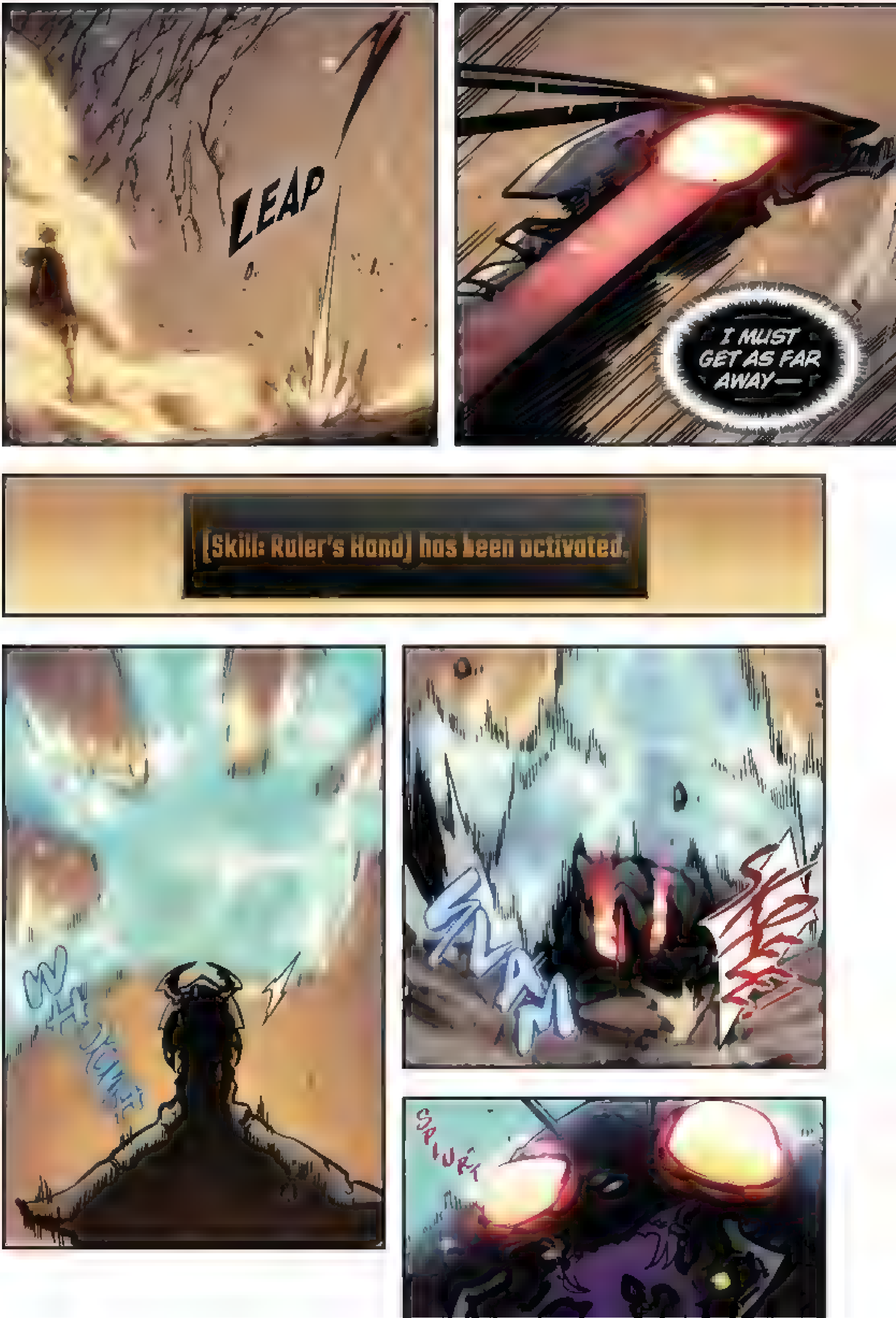
IT LOOKS LIKE A DEMON DESCENDING ON THE HUMAN WORLD.
RUMBLE
......
FWOOSH
HOW IS THIS POSSIBLE?
I...

...WAS BORN STRONGER THAN ANYONE.
I STAND ABOVE EVERYTHING AND DEVOUR EVERYTHING.
I LEVEL UP CONTINUOUSLY.
I AM THE KING.

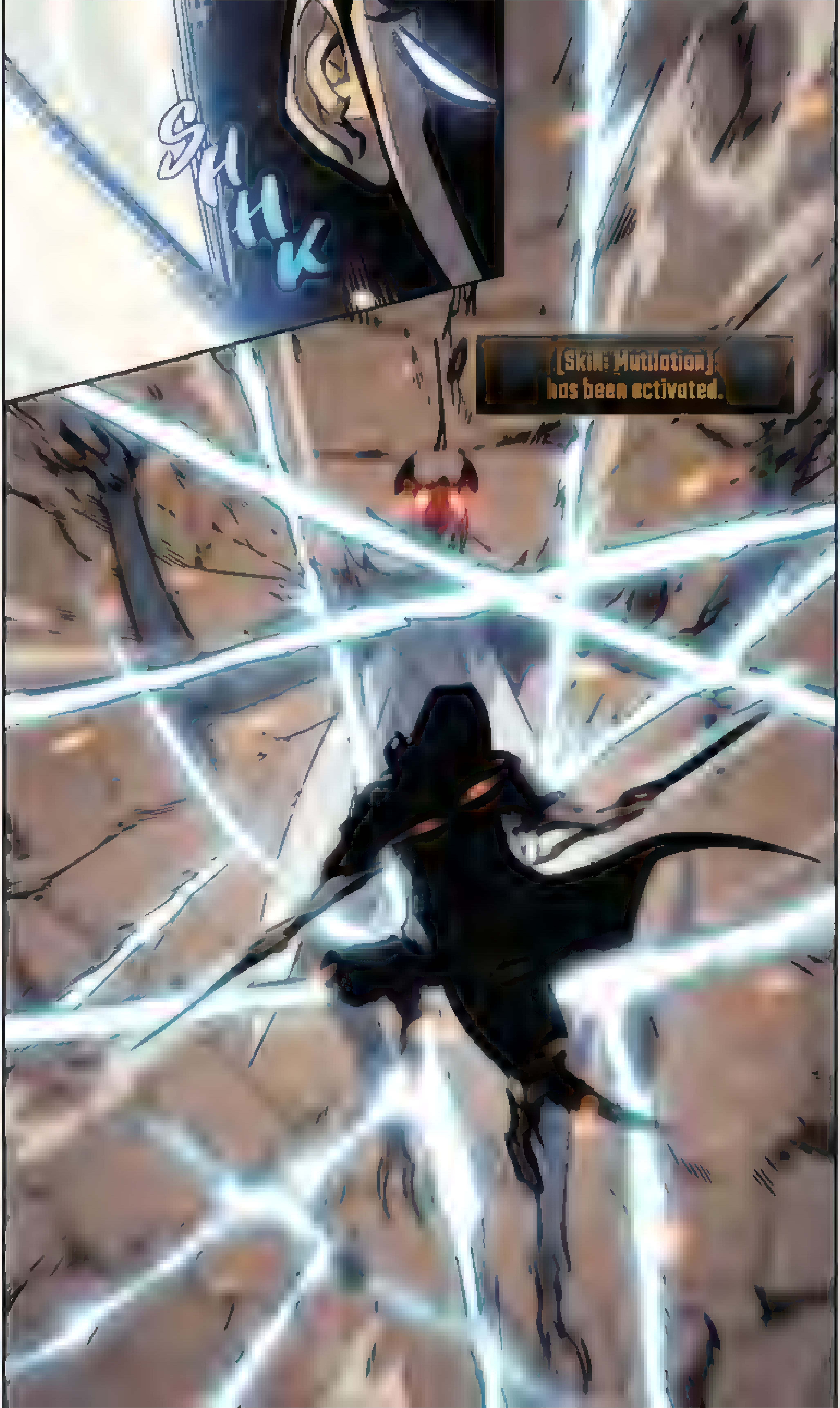
I AM SUPPOSED TO BE THE KING.
I AM SUPPOSED TO...
RUN...

RUN AWAY.

IN ORDER TO SURVIVE...
...I NEED TO RUN AWAY!
FWOOSH
IS THAT HUNTER MIN'S HEALING POWER?
I'VE NEVER SEEN ANY MAGIC BEAST ABSORB POWER FROM THOSE IT CONSUMED.


LEAP
I MUST GET AS FAR AWAY—
[Skill: Ruler's Hand] has been activated.
SLAM
SPLURT

ZING
S-SKREE!
I CAN'T LET HIM GET AWAY!
LEAP


SHHK
[Skill: Mutilation] has been activated.

You have defeated an enemy.
You have leveled up!
You have leveled up!
HUNTER SUNG!!
HUNTER CHA IS...!

CRAP, THAT TOOK TOO LONG.
I NEED TO FIND A HEALER QUICKLY.
SHADOW EXCHANGE MIGHT NOT BE THE BEST WAY.
THE COOLDOWN PERIOD ISN'T OVER YET, AND I'VE ALSO NEVER TRIED TRAVELING WITH SOMEONE.
EVEN WITH KAISEL AS A SECOND OPTION, HUNTER CHA WILL DIE BEFORE WE GET ANYWHERE.
WILL ANY HEALERS FROM THE GUILD OF THE DRAWN SWORD HAVE SURVIVED?
THERE HAS TO BE ANOTHER WAY...
FLINCH

COULD YOU PLEASE TURN OFF THE CAMERA FOR A MOMENT?
EXCUSE ME?
NOW. TURN IT OFF, OR I'LL BREAK IT.
Y-YES, SIR.
WHY DOES HE SUDDENLY WANT THE CAMERA OFF...?
SHADOW SOLDIERS, FIND HUNTER MIN'S REMAINS!

BYUNGGU'S REMAINS?
NO WAY...
THE ANT ATE HIS WHOLE HEAD?
IS THIS GOING TO WORK?
HUNTER SUNG... WHAT ARE YOU PLANNING?
Shadow Extraction is possible.
THANK GOD.

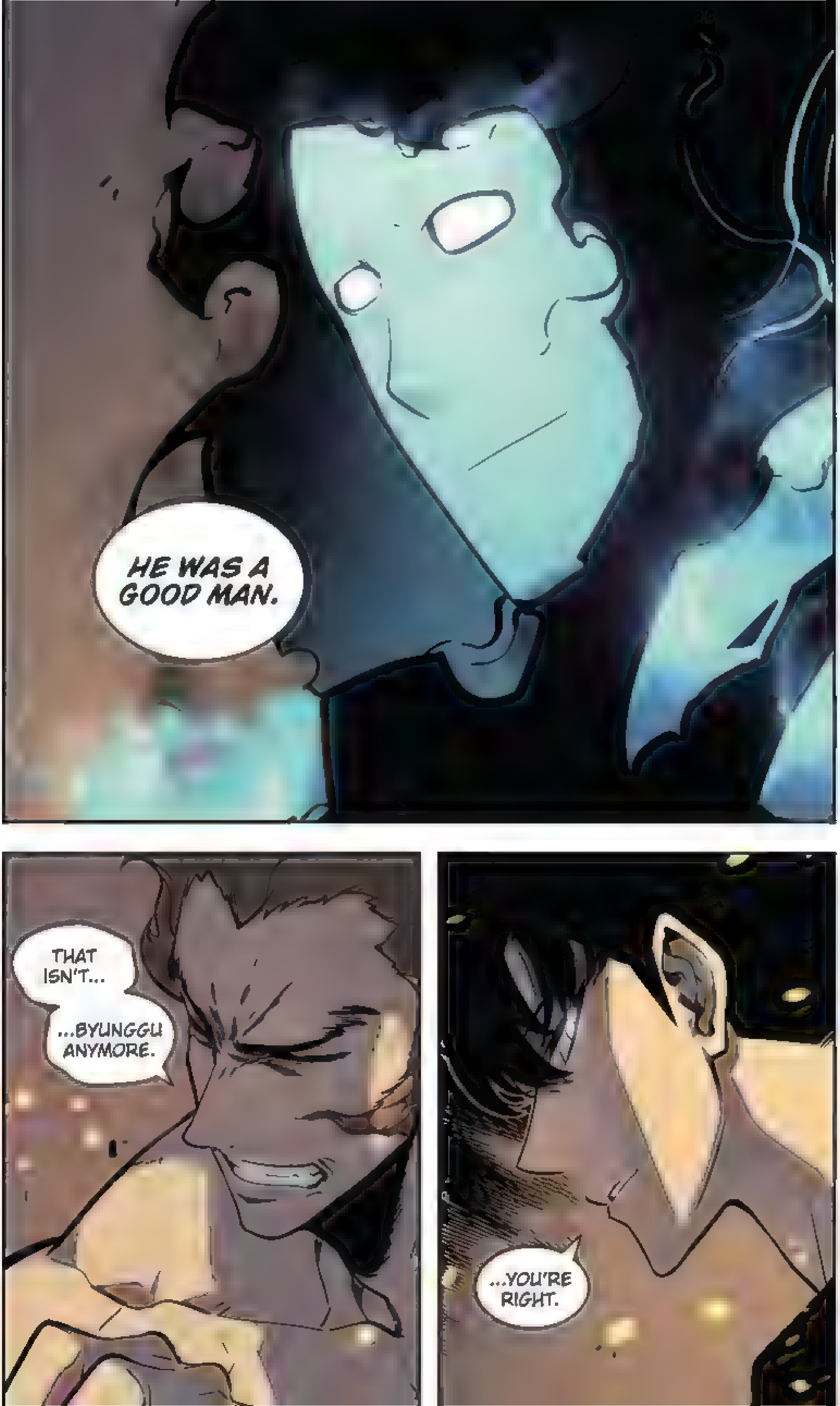
...THIS IS THE BEST I CAN DO.
ARISE.
WHOOSH
Shadow Extraction has failed.
PING

HOW...?
ARISE.
Shadow Extraction has failed.
WITH MY CURRENT ABILITY, I SHOULD BE ABLE TO EASILY EXTRACT HIS SHADOW...
IS HE RESISTING?
HE MUST THINK IT'S NOT RIGHT TO TRANSFORM A HUMAN INTO A SHADOW SOLDIER.

BUT...
...I HAVE ANOTHER HUMAN LIFE TO SAVE.
ARISE.
HUNTER SUNG!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING TO BYUNGGU?!!
GRAB
YOUR POWER...!
IS THIS YOUR ABILITY...?!!
VWOOOM

YOU WIELD POWER OVER THE DEAD?!

NO WAY... YOU CAN COMMAND THE POWER OF THE DEAD?
MASTER SUNG, YOU'RE NO ORDINARY SUMMONER, ARE YOU?
VMMM
TMP
TMP
BYUNGGU IS...
...HEALING HUNTER CHA?
I CAN TELL WHAT KIND OF PERSON HUNTER MIN WAS WHEN HE WAS ALIVE.
HE HEALED HUNTER CHA WITHOUT ME GIVING HIM AN ORDER...


HE WAS A GOOD MAN.
THAT ISN'T...
...BYUNGGU ANYMORE.
...YOU'RE RIGHT.

HE CAN SUMMON MINIONS FROM THE DECEASED?
I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT TO SAY.
I UNDERSTAND WHY HE ASKED ME TO TURN OFF THE CAMERA. HE CAN'T REVEAL THIS POWER TO THE PUBLIC.
THE FIERCER THE BATTLEFIELD, THE STRONGER HE GROWS...
WHAT A TERRIFYING ABILITY!
YOU WILL FIGHT ON MANY MORE BATTLE-FIELDS AFTER THIS.
BYUNGGU'S ABILITY WILL DEFINITELY HELP YOU EACH TIME...
...BUT... HE HATED FIGHTING.
PLEASE DO NOT TAKE BYUNGGU...
...TO BATTLE AGAIN.

......
THIS IS THE SECOND TIME YOU'VE GRABBED ME BY THE SHOUL-DER, HUNTER BAEK.
SHF
WHAT'S DIFFERENT THIS TIME IS...
...YOU'RE ASKING ME FOR A FAVOR INSTEAD OF GIVING ME AN ORDER.
I AGREE WITH YOU, HUNTER BAEK.
RELEASE.

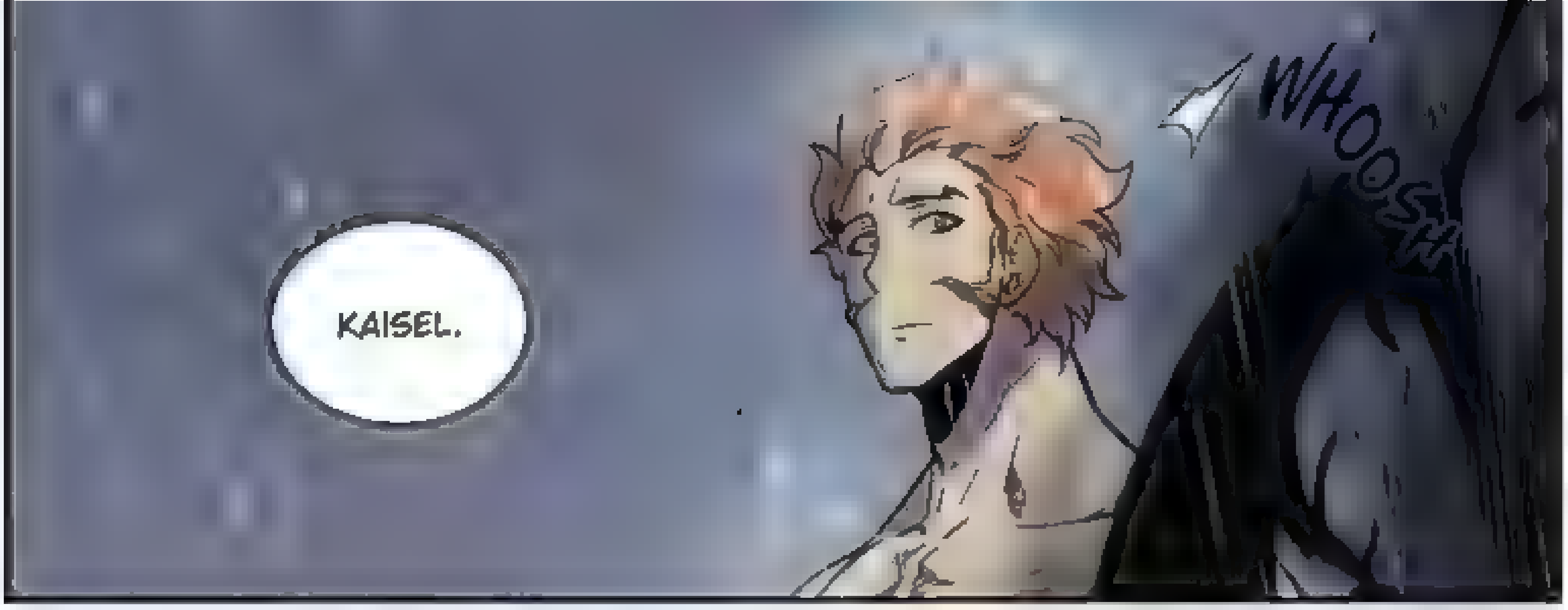
FSHHH

WSH
THANK YOU.

CHFF
CHFF
CHFF
CHFF

THE HUNTERS ARE OVER THERE!

I'M STAYING BEHIND.
HUNTER SUNG?
FSHH
I STILL HAVE THINGS TO TAKE CARE OF HERE.
I SEE. BECAUSE...
...IT'S NOT OVER YET.
I'LL CLEAN THINGS UP ONCE I'VE SEEN YOU ON YOUR WAY.


KAISEL.
WHOOSH

I'LL SEE YOU LATER.

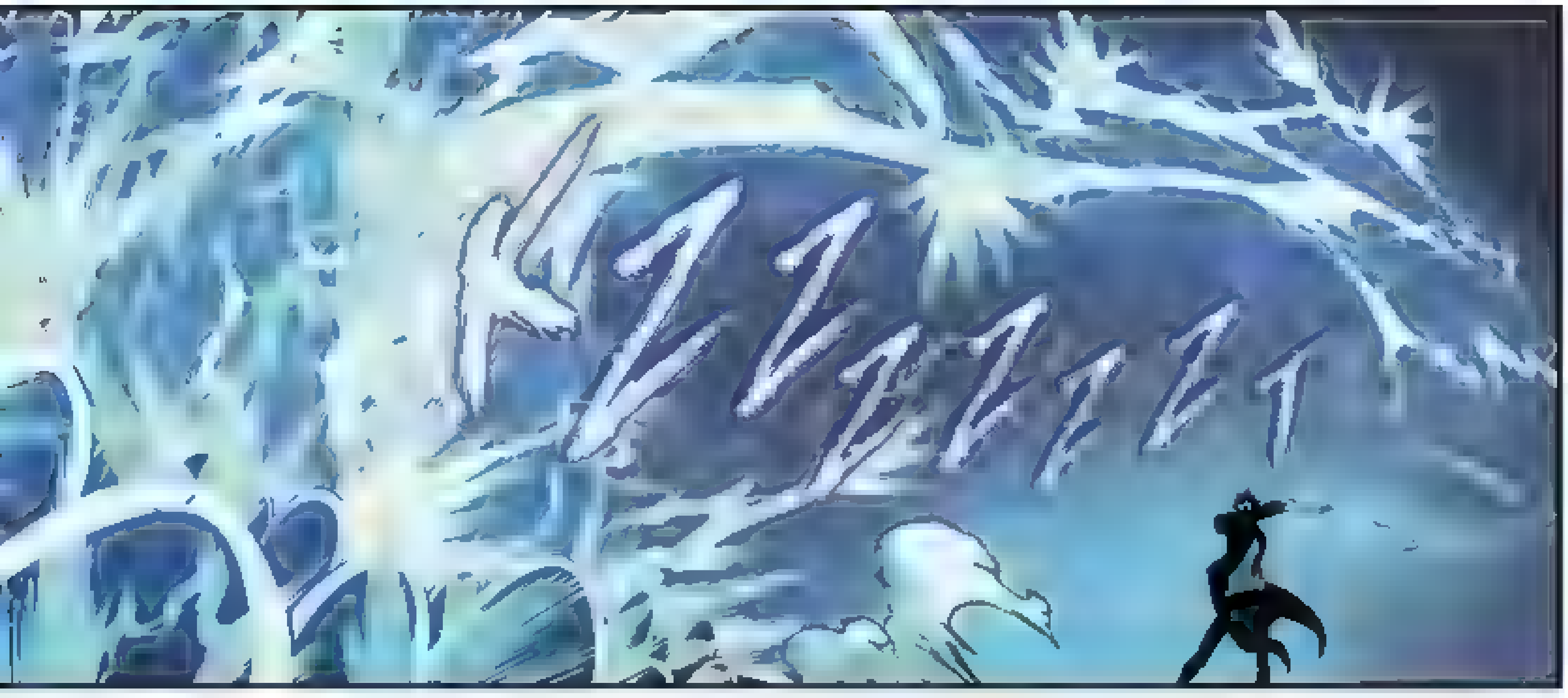
LET'S GO.
FWAP
177

<It... it was a monster.>
<You guys didn't see it, so you don't know...>
FSHHHH
<Mr. Goto...>
<I saw Mr. Goto get killed by that bastard...!>
<We can't win. This raid has failed.>
<No hunter can defeat that monst—>
<You needn't worry.>
<The Jeju Island raid...is over.>
<That magic beast is dead.>

<N-no way!>
<.>
<We've received confirmation from the Korean headquarters.>
<Mr. Sukimoto... There's an incredible hunter here in Korea.>
<Ha-ha. They can't be better than you, surely?>
<Well... I'm not so sure.>
<What's the hunter's name?>
<Jinwoo Sung...>
<The ants are spreading out!>
<There are still stray ants!>
<Everyone, prepare for battle!>

BOOM
EVEN UNHATCHED EGGS GIVE EXPERIENCE POINTS.
THAT'S LUCKY.
INVENTORY.

INVENTORY
I REALLY NEED TO ORGANIZE THIS SOMEDAY.
HUH, IS THIS...?
I FORGOT ABOUT THIS.
SHOULD I TRY IT OUT...?
WHIRRR



OH...IT'S A WASTE TO JUST LET THIS SIT IN MY INVENTORY, ISN'T IT?
MAYBE I'LL TAKE CARE OF THE REST WITH THIS.

<What are your thoughts?>
<Sir?>
<You made me watch the video — now it's past 4 a.m.>
DAVID BRANNON
DIRECTOR OF THE HUNTER COMMAND CENTER

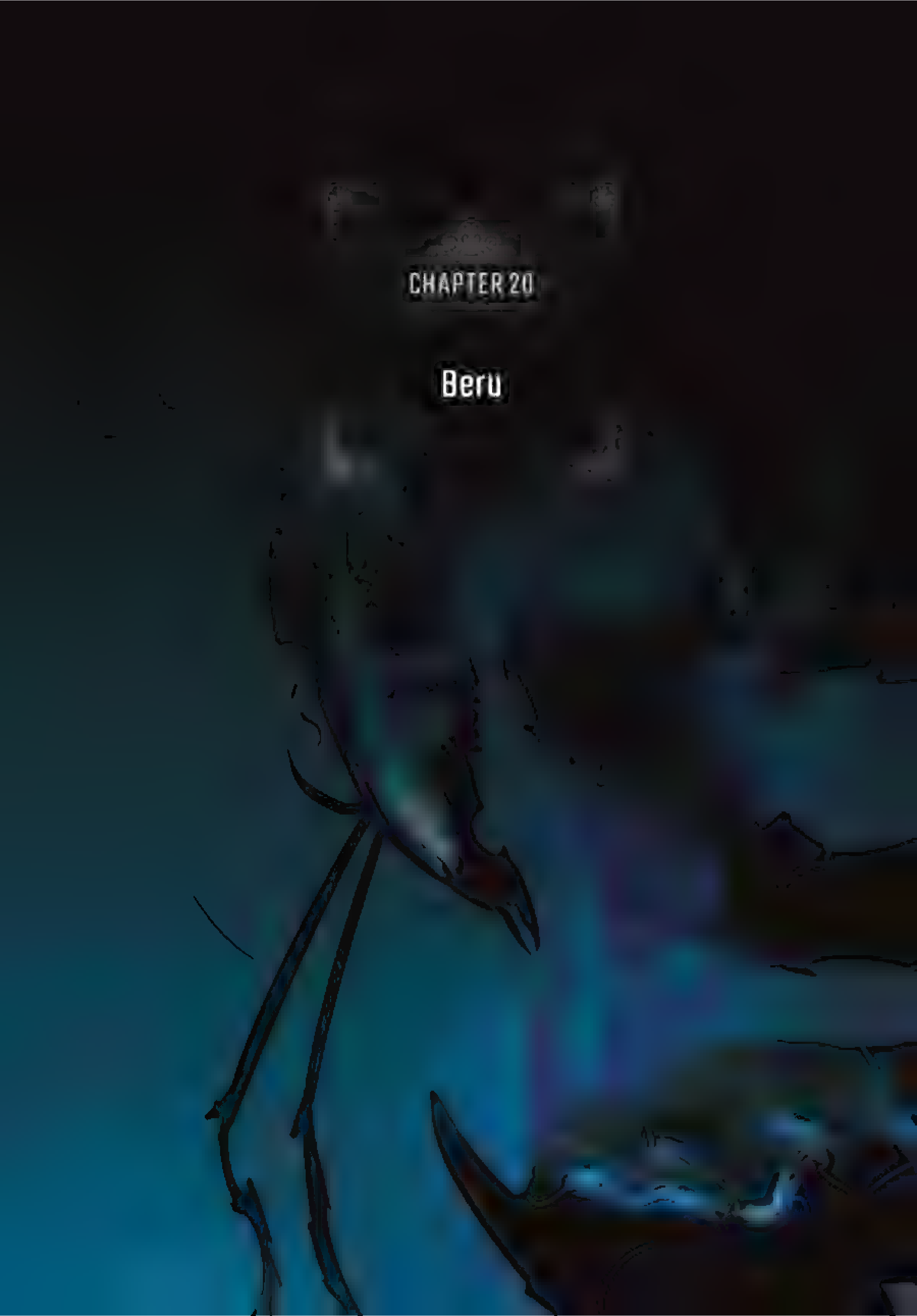
<Is there anything to say? You're here at this hour because you knew how I'd react.>
<A hunter who can control several hundred minions.>
<He's an outstanding talent.>
<It's a waste to let him stay in a small country like South Korea.>
<I agree.>
<What else do we know about him?>
SLIDE
<The explosion at the Hunter Command Center.>
<The so-called "Ilhwan Sung Incident.">

<An unidentified "man" was captured by James, an A-rank hunter, at an A-rank gate that appeared on the East Coast.>
<Whether the "man" was human or a magic beast is unclear. But he insisted he was a Korean hunter.>
<The center has retained all of the information they collected at that time.>
<It turns out he is Jinwoo Sung's father.>
<This is our chance. Other countries don't even know Hunter Sung's name.>
FLIP
<This is different from Dongsoo Hwang.>
<South Korea is a longtime ally of the United States.>
<Poaching two S-rank hunters from the same country... That would be like turning our backs on our own.>
<Still, isn't he worth it?>

<......>
<Can you make it happen?>
<I'll do my best.>

CHAPTER 20

Beru



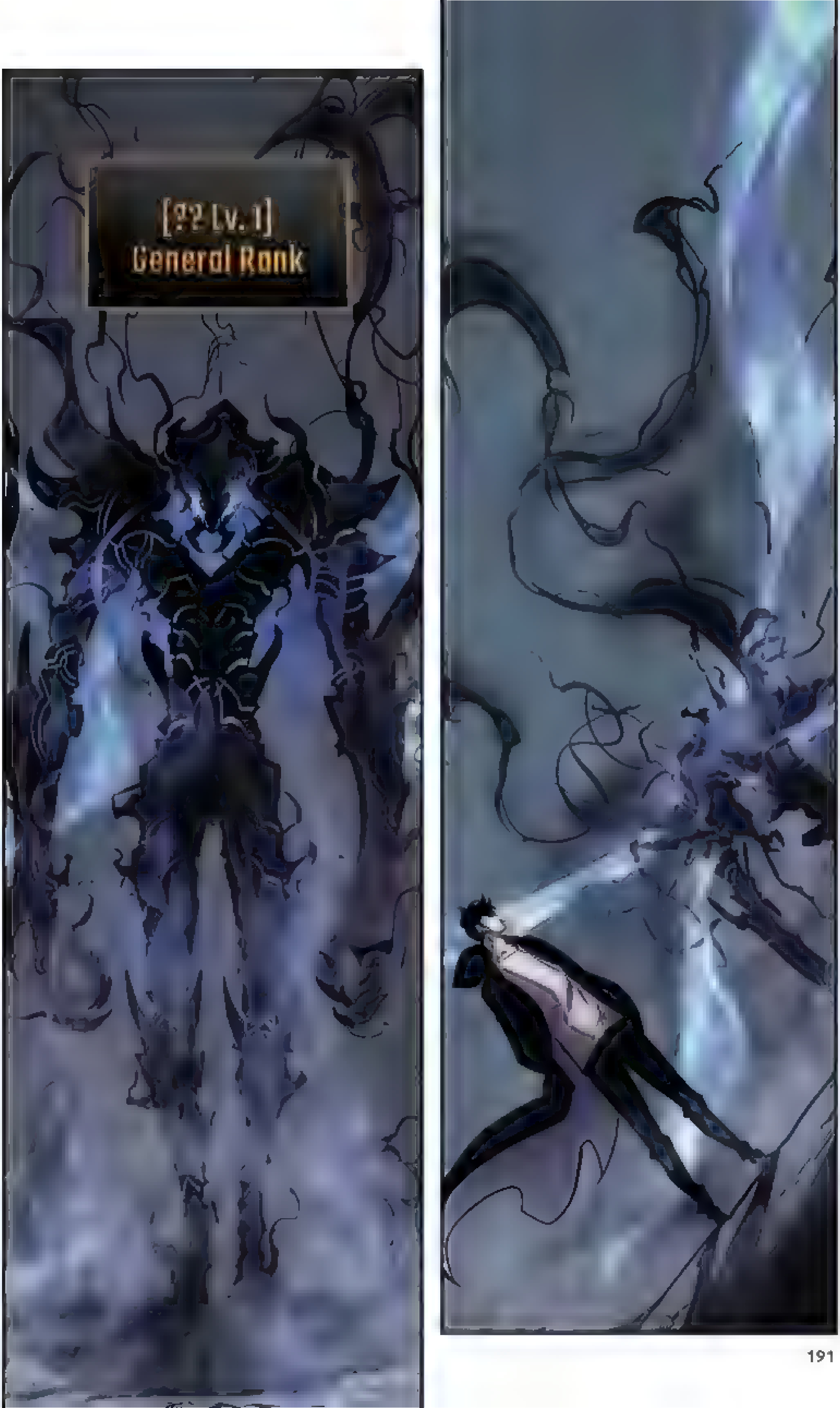
Solo Leveling

You have leveled up!
I GUESS I'VE REACHED LEVEL ONE HUNDRED WITH THIS.
Name:
Jinwoo Sung
Level: 100
FINALLY...

THIS MAGIC BEAST'S ENERGY IS ESPECIALLY POWERFUL.
ARISE.
WHOOSH
......!

WHAT IS THIS DARKNESS?
I CAN'T SENSE A THING.
IS IT BECAUSE I USED THE SHADOW EXTRACTION SKILL AGAINST THIS ONE?
DID I... FAIL?
OH, IT'S BACK.
FSHH

Shadow Extraction is successful.
VWOOM
I THOUGHT I FAILED.


[?? Lv. 1]
General Rank

I'VE NEVER SEEN THAT RANK BEFORE.
REGULAR, ELITE, KNIGHT, ELITE KNIGHT...SO GENERAL RANK COMES NEXT?
WHICH MEANS THIS SOLDIER IS ON A WHOLE DIFFERENT LEVEL THAN MY OTHER SOLDIERS.
CONSIDERING HIS ABILITIES WHEN HE WAS ALIVE, THAT MAKES SENSE.
NEXT UP IS THE QUEE—
MY KING...

PLEASE GRANT ME...
...A NAME...
LIKE THE OTHER SOLDIERS, THIS ONE POSSESSES ABSOLUTE LOYALTY TO ME.
HOW CAN YOU TALK?
I JUST...
...CAN.
HE "JUST CAN"?
IS HE ABLE TO SPEAK NOW BECAUSE HE WAS ABLE TO SPEAK BEFORE HE BECAME MY SOLDIER?

NO, IRON USED BE HUMAN, BUT HE HASN'T BEEN ABLE TO CONVERSE WITH ME SINCE BECOMING A SHADOW SOLDER.
SAME FOR HUNTER MIN AND FANG.
THERE IS ONLY ONE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HIM AND THE OTHERS. RANK.

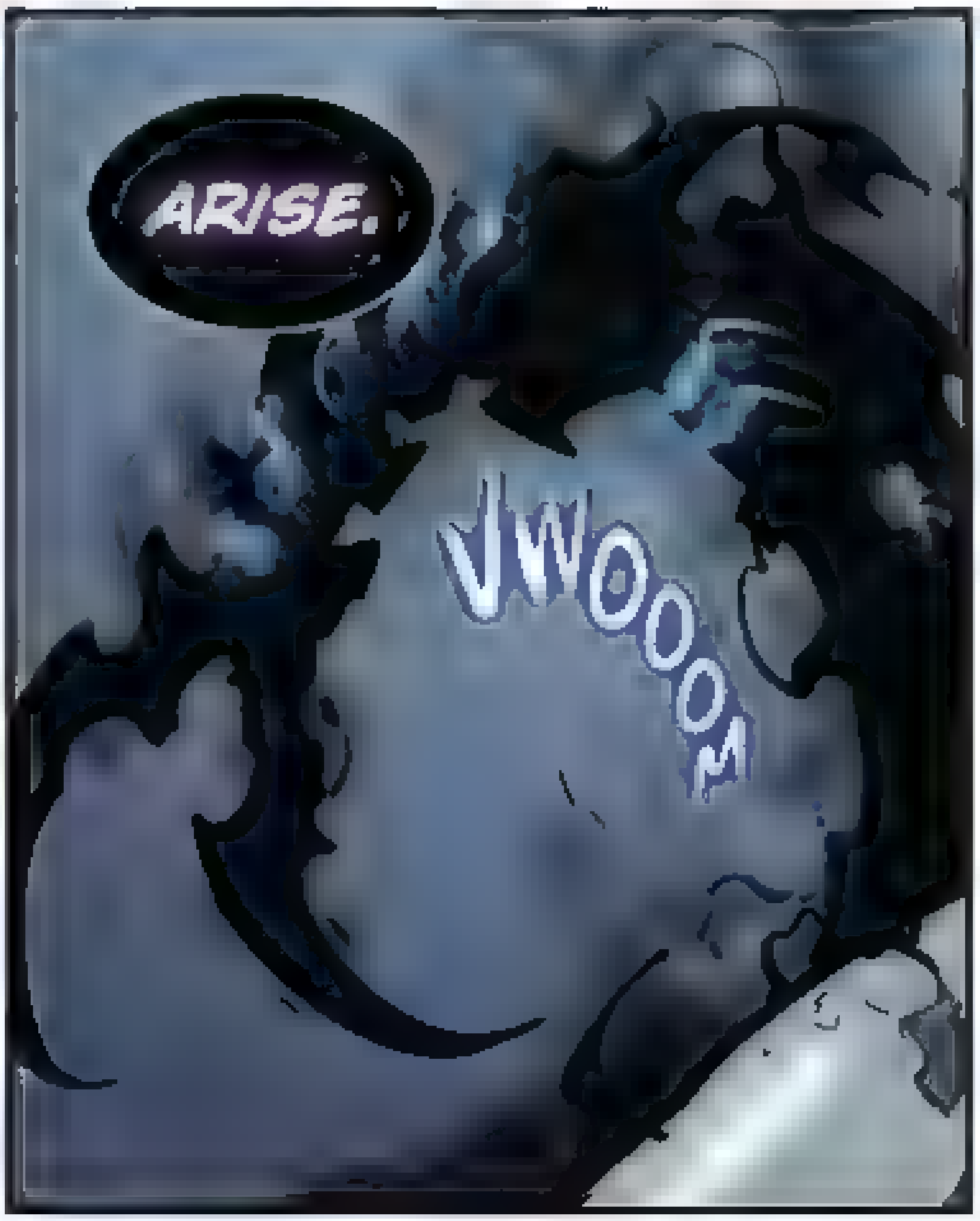
MAYBE MY CURRENT SOLDIERS WILL BE ABLE TO TALK AS THEIR RANKS GO UP...
[?? Lv. 1]
General Rank
I WAS THE ONE WHO KILLED YOU.
WHY DO YOU FOLLOW ME SO WILLINGLY?
I...
...DIDN'T DIE...
...I WAS REBORN...BY MY MASTER'S POWER...
WITHIN MY BODY NOW... THERE IS OVERWHELMING... JOY.
I WILL FOLLOW MY MASTER ALONE...FOR ETERNITY.

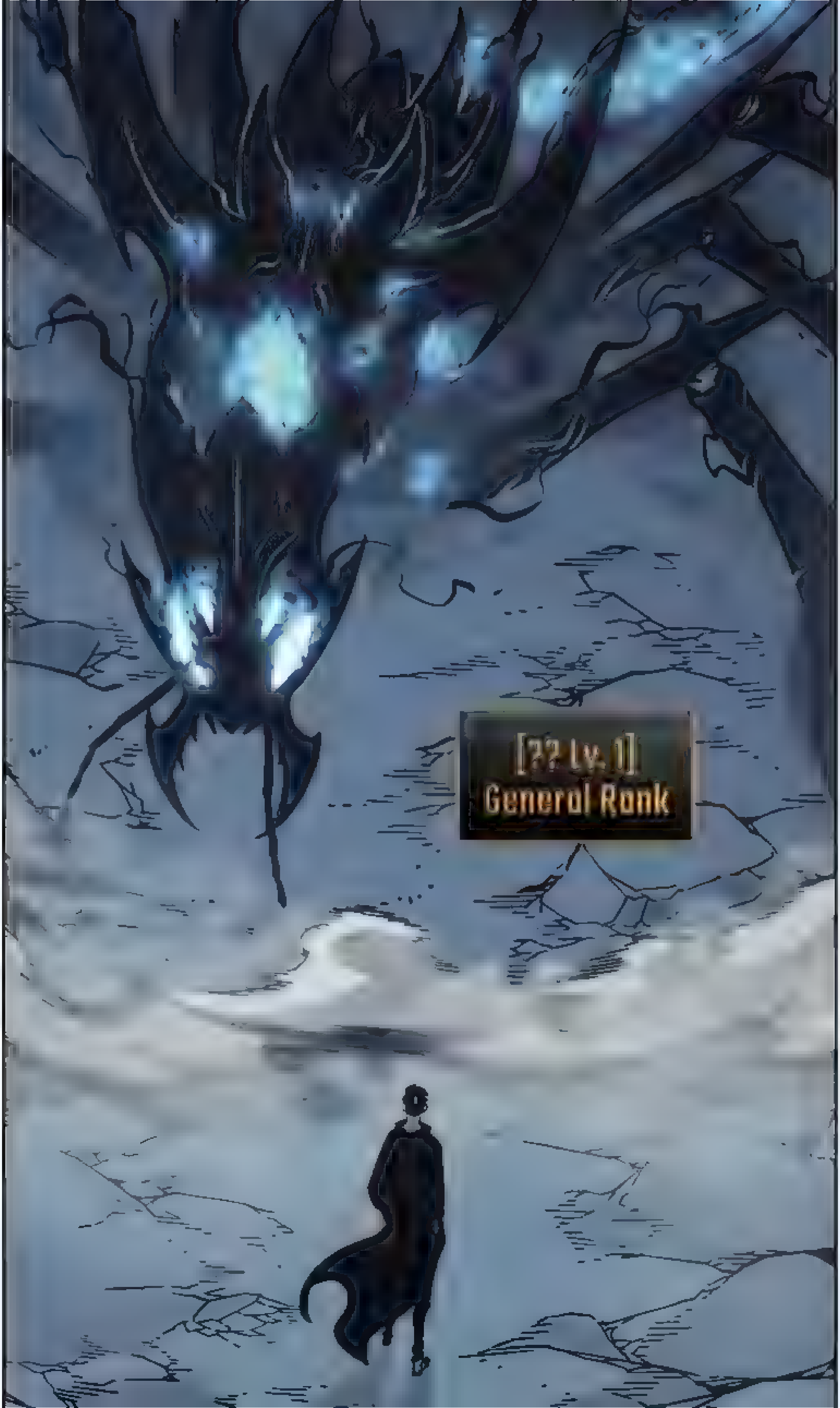
MY KING...
...PLEASE GRANT ME A NAME.
NOT LIKE I CAN CALL YOU "ANT" OR "BUG," CAN I?
I NEED SOMETHING TO DIFFERENTIATE FROM THE OTHER ANTS...

Empire of the Ants (*Les Fourmis*) is a science fiction novel by Bernard Werber, originally published in France in 1991.

THANK YOU... MASTER.
[Beru Lv.1]
General Rank

GOOD. TIME FOR THE QUEEN NOW.


ARISE.
VWOOOM


[?? Lv. 1]
General Rank

HMM? MY LINK WITH THE ANTS HAS GOTTEN WEAKER.

BERU, DO YOU KNOW WHAT'S HAPPENING?
RULING THE ARMY OF ANTS... IS THE QUEEN'S UNIQUE ABILITY.
SO THAT MEANS CONTROL OF THE ANTS HAS TRANSFERRED TO THE QUEEN?
THAT IS RIGHT.
DESPITE THE QUEEN'S RANK, HER MAGIC POWER IS PATHETIC. WHY DID IT DECREASE?
MOST OF THE QUEEN'S MAGIC POWER IS...FOR BREEDING.
BREEDING ISN'T POSSIBLE WITHOUT...
...A PHYSICAL BODY... SO...
IN OTHER WORDS, THE QUEEN ISN'T SUITED FOR BATTLE.
THAT IS CORRECT... MASTER.
......

YOU DON'T NEED TWO LEADERS FOR ONE ORGANIZATION.
RELEASE.
WHOOOSH

STOP. DON'T COLLECT ESSENCE STONES.
FREEZE

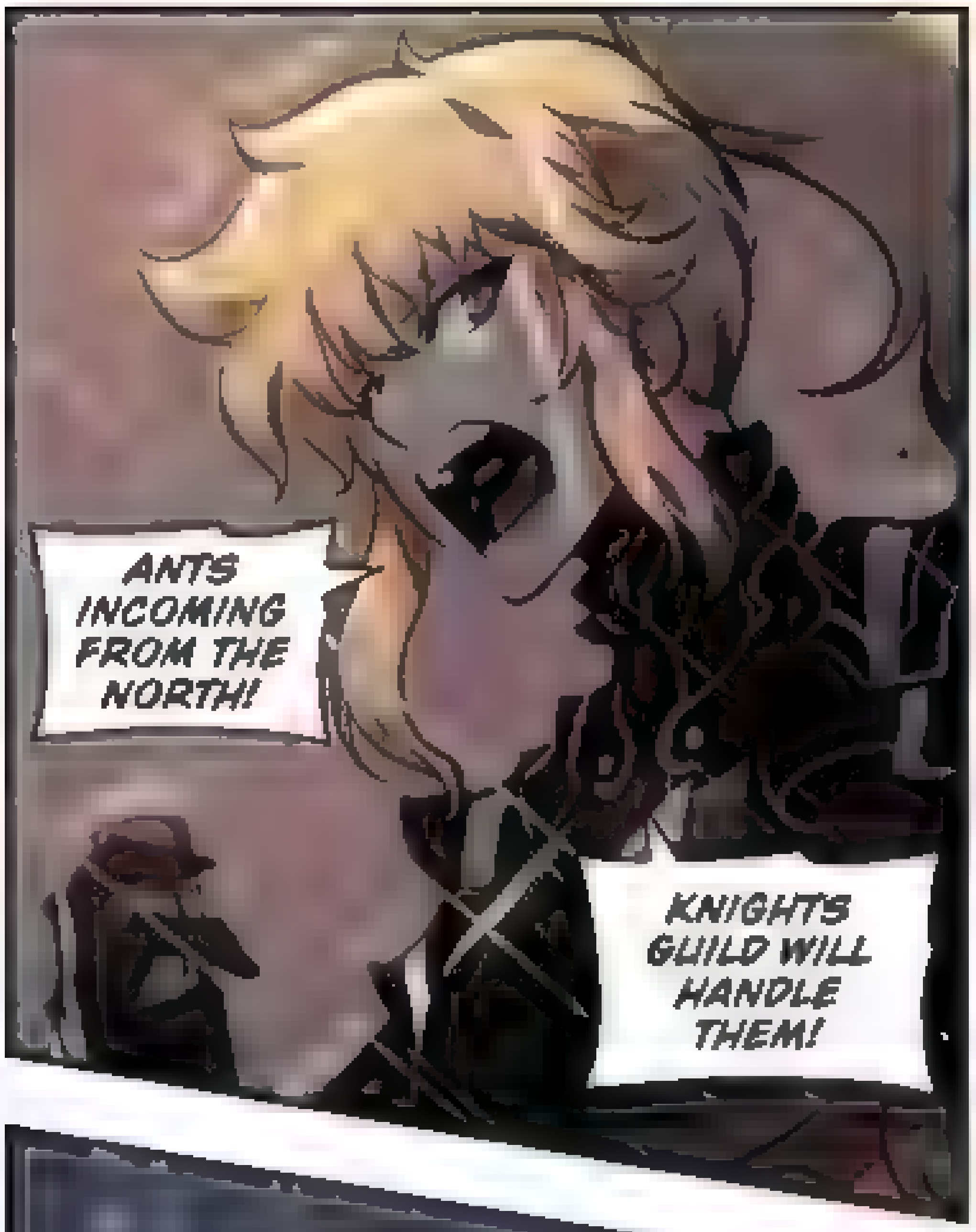
THESE STONES WILL BE USED TO COMPENSATE VICTIMS AND RESTORE JEJU ISLAND.
WE SHOULDN'T TOUCH THEM.
CLATTER
DROP

THE ONE FROM BERU'S CORPSE IS PLENTY.
ANYWAY, THE PROBLEM IS THE SURVIVING ANTS...
CAN I TAKE CARE OF THE REST WITH MY SOLDIERS?
I'LL DO MY BEST, BUT...
...MASTER.
I CAN SENSE...
...THE ENEMIES ARE HAVING DIFFICULTIES... WITHOUT THEIR RULER.
THEY ARE NOT ABLE TO ORGANIZE THEMSELVES. THEY ARE SCATTERING EVERYWHERE.
BERU.
CAN YOU TELL HOW MANY ANTS ARE LEFT?

THERE WERE AROUND 8,700 BEFORE THE ATTACK.
THE NUMBER OF SURVIVING ANTS IS...
...ABOUT 4,000, MASTER.
I THOUGHT I GOT RID OF A LOT OF THEM EARLIER, BUT...
...THERE ARE STILL SO MANY LEFT.
ANY CHANCE YOU CAN TAKE CARE OF THEM ALL?

BY YOUR COMMAND.

ANTS ARE FLYING THIS WAY!!
KA BLAM
KA BLAM
BAM
KA BOOM
BOOM


ANTS INCOMING FROM THE NORTH!
KNIGHTS GUILD WILL HANDLE THEM!

WE'RE NEXT! EVERYONE IN HUNTERS GUILD, GET READY FOR A BATTLE!

RAAAAAH!

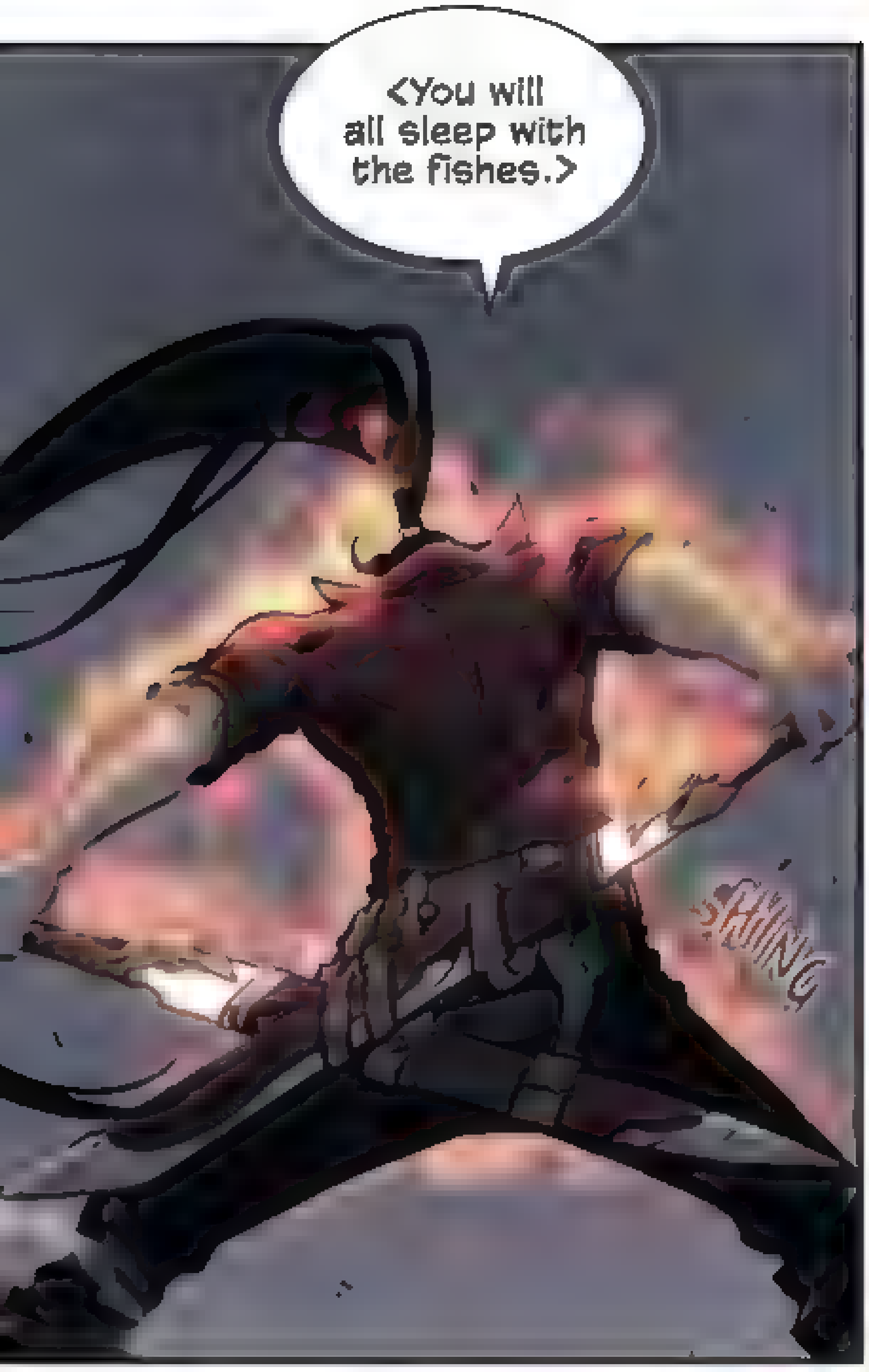
FAME GUILD, WE SHOULD PREPARE FOR BATTLE AS WELL.
CUT DOWN EVERYTHING IN SIGHT!
AH... AHHHH!
H-HOW CAN ANYONE FIGHT THOSE THINGS?!
WHAT'RE YOU DOING? EACH ANT IS AS GOOD AS A B-RANK!
IF YOU DON'T WORK TOGETHER, YOU'LL BE KILLED! ORGANIZE YOURSELVES!
REAPERS GUILD WILL RETRIEVE OUR GLORY!!
HOW IS HE AN A-RANK? HE'S SO PATHETIC!

ANTS ARE ALREADY CLOSING IN ON HAEUNDAE...!
CAN WE HANDLE THEM?
THEY'RE FAST!
THEY'RE RIGHT ON TOP OF US!!

SH
UNK
WH-WHAT JUST...?!
WHAT INCREDIBLE SPEED.
I COULDN'T KEEP MY EYES ON THEM.
WHAT KILLED
...THE ANTS?

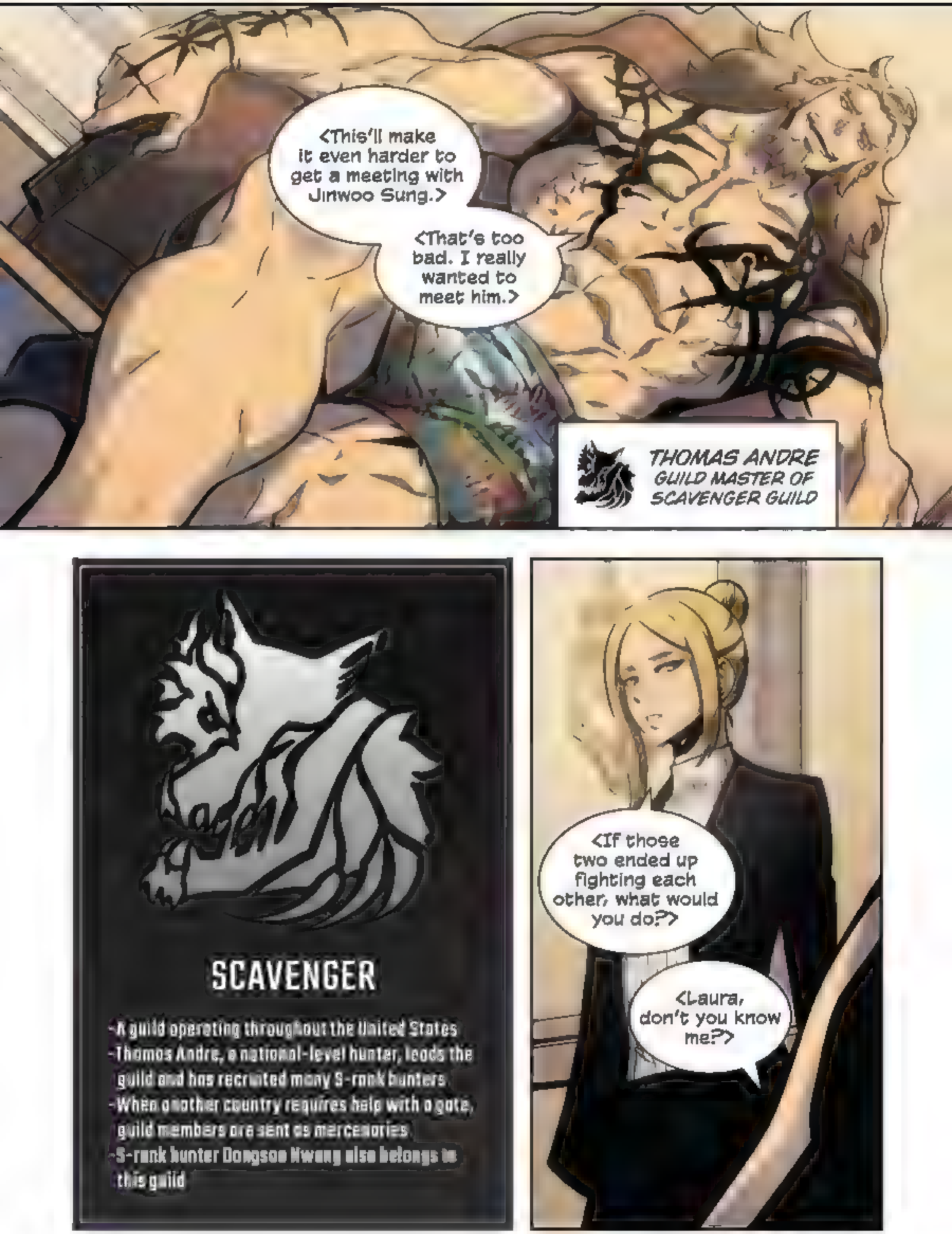
THE ELIMINATION OF THE ANTS TOOK PLACE OVER TWO DAYS THROUGHOUT THE SOUTHERN AREA.
COAST OF CHINA
<I can't believe ants have already made it to China.>
ANTS THEN APPEARED IN CHINESE WATERS.
<No sleep for two days.>
<The second unit is within range!>
<Awaiting orders to open fire!>
<No, hold it.>

<Our hero wants to take care of them by himself.>
<They're endless.>


<You will all sleep with the fishes.>
SHIING

KA BOOM
BOOM
BOOM
CHK
<These weak ants are nothing compared to the one that Jin-whatever guy got to fight.>
<That would've been a fun fight.>
<Too bad.>
CRUMBLE
SPLASH

<What do you think?>
<There is only one connection be-tween Mr. Hwang and Jinwoo Sung.>
<Mr. Hwang's older brother. There is a chance that Jinwoo Sung killed him.>
<So Mr. Hwang wants revenge.>
<That sums it up, right?>
<Looks like it.>


<This'll make it even harder to get a meeting with Jinwoo Sung.>
<That's too bad. I really wanted to meet him.>
THOMAS ANDRE
GUILD MASTER OF SCAVENGER GUILD
SCAVENGER
-A guild operating throughout the United States
-Thomas Andre, a national-level hunter, leads the guild and has recruited many S-rank hunters
-When another country requires help with a gate, guild members are sent as mercenaries
-S-rank hunter Dongsoo Hwang also belongs to this guild
<If those two ended up fighting each other, what would you do?>
<Laura, don't you know me?>

<Mr. Hwang is a Scavenger Guild asset.>
<And Scavenger Guild is mine.>
<There is no mercy for anyone who touches my property.>
<Not even the United States gov-ernment.>

THE THIRD NIGHT OF THE JEJU ISLAND RAID
AN ARMY UNIT AND KNIGHTS GUILD, WHICH REPRESENTS THE SOUTHERN PART OF KOREA...
...HAVE LANDED ON JEJU ISLAND IN ORDER TO COLLECT ESSENCE STONES AND DEAL WITH ANY REMAINING ISSUES.
THERE ONCE WAS A MAN WITH TERRIBLE LUCK.
EH?
HWOO...
THAT MAN DID EVERYTHING HE COULD TO BECOME THE BEST.
HIS DREAM WAS TO BE A GOLD MEDALIST AT THE OLYMPICS.
TMP
TMP
TMP

A STRICT WORKOUT REGIMEN MADE HIM STRONGER.
A CAREFUL DIET OPTIMIZED HIS BODY WEIGHT.
HE ENDURED THE MOST INTENSE TRAINING.
HIS FINAL STEP WAS TO COMPETE AT THE OLYMPICS.
HE WAS ABOUT TO REALIZE HIS DREAM.

THERE WAS NO PROBLEM WITH DRUG TESTING.
AND HE HAD A GREAT DREAM THE NIGHT BEFORE.
HE WAS IN PEAK CONDITION. AND THEN...
...BECAUSE OF HIS SUDDEN AWAKENING...
...HE COULDN'T GO TO THE OLYMPICS AFTER A MANA METER DETECTED HIS POWER.
OH, IS THIS YOUR STORY?
ALTHOUGH THAT MAN HAD TO GIVE UP HIS DREAM ONCE, HE STARTED HAVING A NEW ONE!
WHICH WAS TO ESTABLISH THE BEST GUILD IN THE COUNTRY!
YOU SHOULDN'T LITTER HERE.
THAT IS SO GREAT!
LOOK AT THESE TOP-QUALITY ESSENCE STONES!
IF WE COLLECT ALL OF THESE, WE'LL BE THE BEST GUILD IN KOREA...!
THAT'S EMBEZZLE-MENT!

ANYWAY, HE CERTAINLY DID A THOROUGH JOB.
RELAX AND COME ON. I DON'T SENSE ANY MAGIC POWER.
AHA! HIDING, EH?
CHHK
WELL, NO WORRIES.
WE'RE HERE IF THERE ARE ANY OTHER STRAYS!

B-BRO!
WHAT IS IT?
HUH?!
Y-YOU... WHO ARE YOU?

THE ONLY OTHER PEOPLE SUPPOSED TO BE ON JEJU ISLAND ARE THE STAFF FROM THE ASSOCIATION WHO GAVE US THIS MISSION...
IDENTIFY YOURSELF!
BRO, ARE YOU SURE THAT GUY'S EVEN HUMAN?
HEY! DON'T SHOOT! HE ISN'T A MAGIC BEAST!
YOU HAVE ENTERED A RESTRICTED AREA!
IF YOU DO NOT COMPLY, WE WILL OPEN FIRE!
......

TH-THE LANGUAGE OF MAGIC BEASTS?!
SNAP
SLUMP
SLUMP

WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
THERE IS NO NEED TO CAUSE TROUBLE.
I JUST PUT THEM TO SLEEP.
DID YOU CHECK?
IT'S HIS POWER FOR SURE.
HOW ODD.
I DON'T KNOW WHY HE'S HELPING THE HUMANS.
WHO KNOWS WHAT HE'S THINKING?
IF YOU'RE SO CURIOUS, WHY DON'T YOU GO ASK HIM YOURSELF?
THE AIR IS RANK WITH THE STINK OF ROTTEN INSECTS.
IF SHE SAW THIS, SHE'D FREAK OUT.

THE HUNT WILL PROCEED AS PLANNED.
NOTHING HAS CHANGED.
GOT IT.

ZZT

OH RIGHT. IT LOOKS LIKE ONE OF THEM IS HERE.
IN KOREA?
HOW ABOUT WE GET RID OF THAT ONE FIRST, SINCE WE'RE ALREADY HERE?
I THINK...
...WE SHOULD LET HIM HANDLE THIS AREA.

ARE YOU SAYING YOU DON'T WANT TO GET INVOLVED?
YOU MAY SAY THAT.
ZWP
THINK WHAT YOU LIKE.
COWARD...

WELL, I GUESS THERE ISN'T ANY REASON TO STIR THINGS UP.
SHHK

TAK
VMM

CLICK
CLICK
SNAP
CLICK
WHEN THE JEJU ISLAND RAID WAS OVER, IT WAS ALL ANYONE COULD TALK ABOUT, BOTH ONLINE AND OFFLINE.
> Wow...I don't know what to say...
> I'm pretty sure it's impossible to make that many minions, right?
> My cancer of ten years was cured after watching Hunter Sung's minions take out those beasts.
> Amazing. You were incredible.
> I lost my parents on Jeju Island four years ago.
> Hunter Sung probably won't see this, but...

THE JEJU ISLAND MISSION WAS JINWOO'S FIRST OFFICIAL RAID SINCE HE WAS REEVALUATED AS AN S-RANK HUNTER.
> At this point, can't he be considered a national-level hunter?
> Nah. I don't think so. Let's not get ahead of ourselves
> Why not? He cleared an S-rank dungeon pretty much by himself, and he's obviously way stronger than other S-rank hunters.
HIS PUBLIC DEBUT, SO TO SPEAK.
> But Hunter Sung doesn't have much experience yet. If he's actually that talented, he'll gain recognition in due time.
> In any case, he's so freaking cool.
> I heard E-ranks aren't that different from normal people, so how did he get so powerful all of a sudden?
> Is Hunter Sung a reawakened being?
> Most people don't realize that Jinwoo is a reawakened being.
> 'Cos he asked for his information to stay confidential, so...
SINCE TALK OF THE RAID WAS ON EVERYONE'S LIPS, IT FLOODED ALL THE ONLINE FORUMS...
...AND JINWOO'S NAME WAS BROUGHT UP IN EVERY CONVERSATION.

HOWEVER, HE COULDN'T ESCAPE ACCUSATIONS THAT...
> But, wait...Byunggu Min's family wouldn't have lost him if Hunter Sung had joined the raid from the start, right?
> Why did he show up late after he said he wouldn't get involved?
...THE CASUALTIES WOULD'VE BEEN MINIMAL IF HE HAD JOINED THE RAID SOONER.
OF COURSE, SOME ADVOCATED FOR JINWOO...
...BUT THERE WERE NOT MANY REFUTING THE CRITICISM DIRECTED AT HIM.

THAT HIS DELAY RESULTED IN CASUALTIES WAS SIMPLE FACT.

I NEVER THOUGHT A LONE HERO COULD END A WAR.
BUT AFTER THIS RAID...
...I THINK I MAY HAVE BEEN WRONG.
PLEASE, CHIN UP, HUNTER SUNG.
YOU PUT A FINAL PERIOD ON A STORY THAT WAS FULL OF TRAGEDY.

THANK YOU.

?
THE FIFTH JEJU ISLAND RAID. A TOTAL OF 4,801 HUNTERS PARTICIPATED. 728 REGULAR AWAKENED BEINGS WERE MOBILIZED.
64 AWAKENED BEINGS AND 32 CIVILIANS WERE KILLED OR INJURED.
IT WAS A TRAGIC ENDING WITH DEVASTATING NUMBERS. HOWEVER, OF THE FOUR RAIDS, IT WAS THE ONE WITH THE FEWEST CASUALTIES.

SO...
...ARE YOU PLANNING TO FORM A GUILD?
S-RANK HUNTERS DON'T NEED A GUILD MASTER'S LICENSE.
ALL YOU NEED TO DO IS GIVE THE ASSOCIATION A CALL.
WE'LL TAKE CARE OF THE REST.
...ALL RIGHT.

I SHOULD REALLY LOOK INTO THE PERKS.
DID YOU CAST SOME KIND OF A BARRIER SPELL ON JEJU ISLAND?
PARDON?
I WAS WONDERING IF, BY ANY CHANCE, YOU FORGOT THAT YOU CAST A BARRIER SPELL.
NO, I'VE NEVER DONE THAT.
ALL THOSE WHO WERE SENT TO COLLECT ESSENCE STONES AND KILL THE SURVIVING ANTS HAD PASSED OUT AT SOME POINT.
IT WAS A MIXED TEAM OF A- AND B-RANK HUNTERS, INCLUDING THE KNIGHTS GUILD.

I SEE... THAT'S WHAT I THOUGHT.
WHAT DID THE HUNTERS SAY ABOUT IT?
THEY CAN'T SEEM TO REMEMBER ANYTHING LEADING UP TO WHEN THEY LOST CONSCIOUSNESS.
WE HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO DETERMINE IF THEY ACTUALLY WERE VICTIMS OF MAGIC.
......
COULD IT HAVE BEEN SOME KIND OF TRAP THE ANTS SET?

PRESIDENT GO.
MY GUEST HAS ARRIVED EARLIER THAN EXPECTED, SO I MUST LEAVE NOW.
THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME.
OF COURSE.
I SHOULD LEAVE TOO.

ARE YOU MR. JINWOO SUNG?
HOW ARE YOU, HUNTER SUNG?
I AM ADAM WHITE, SENIOR AGENT OF THE HUNTER COMMAND CENTER IN THE UNITED STATES.
HUNTER COMMAND CENTER?
PLEASE JUST CALL ME ADAM.

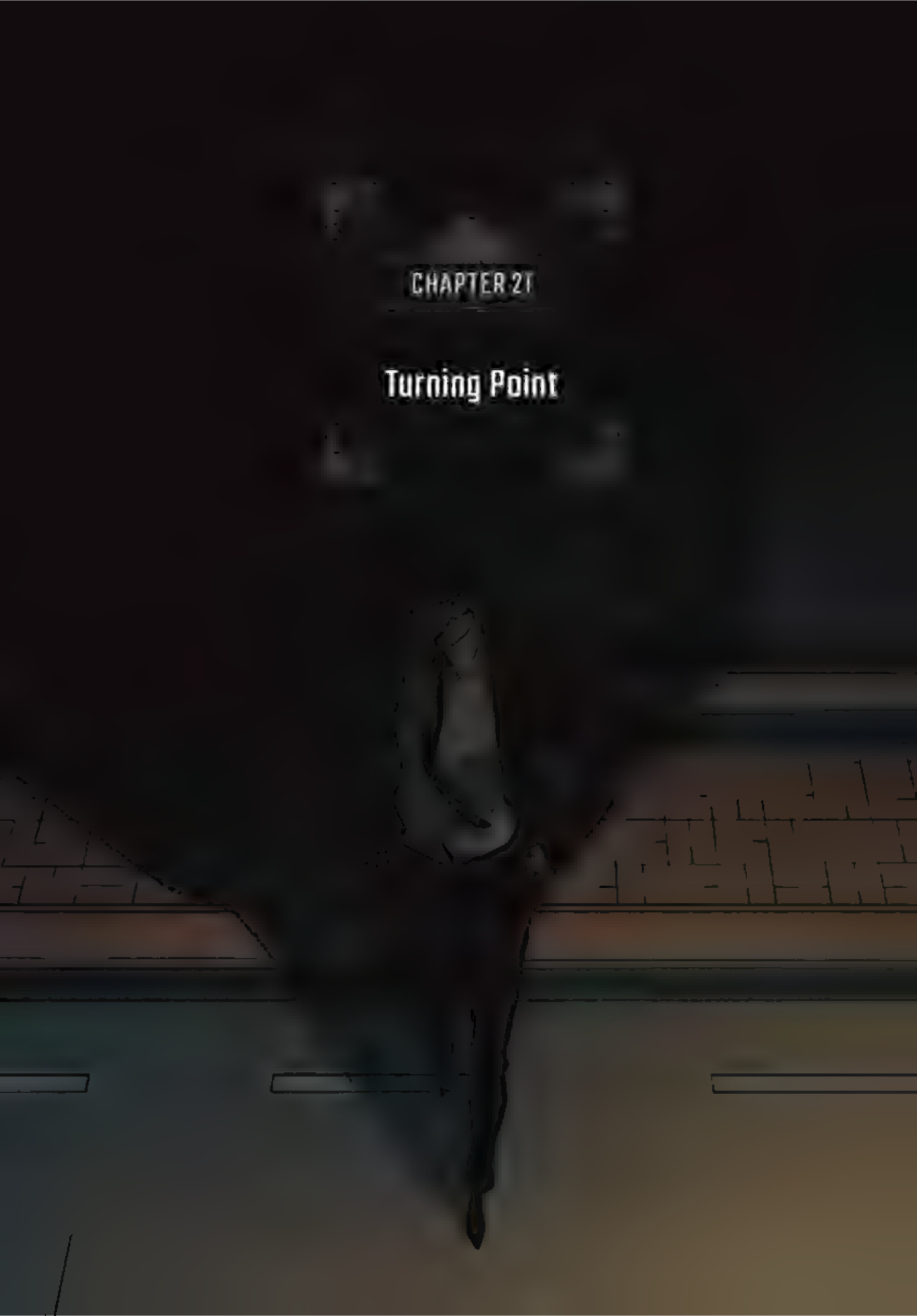
I DROPPED BY YOUR OFFICE AS WELL, BUT YOU'RE A DIFFICULT MAN TO CATCH.
PLEASE FORGIVE ME FOR COMING TO MEET YOU HERE.
HE WENT TO THE OFFICE TOO?
OH, WAIT...
IS HE THE FOREIGNER JINHO MENTIONED BEFORE?
WHAT BRINGS YOU HERE?
I HAVE SOME INFORMATION I'D LIKE TO SHARE WITH YOU.
INFORMA-TION...?

IT'S THE KIND OF INTEL...
...THAT NO OTHER COUNTRY OR ORGANIZATION CAN PROVIDE.
SAVE US, THE HUNTER COMMAND CENTER.
WHEN IT COMES TO CERTAIN EXCEPTIONAL PEOPLE, THERE ARE BENEFITS WE CAN REAP BY SIMPLY PROVIDING INFORMATION.
......
WHY GIVE ME SUCH IMPORTANT INFORMATION?

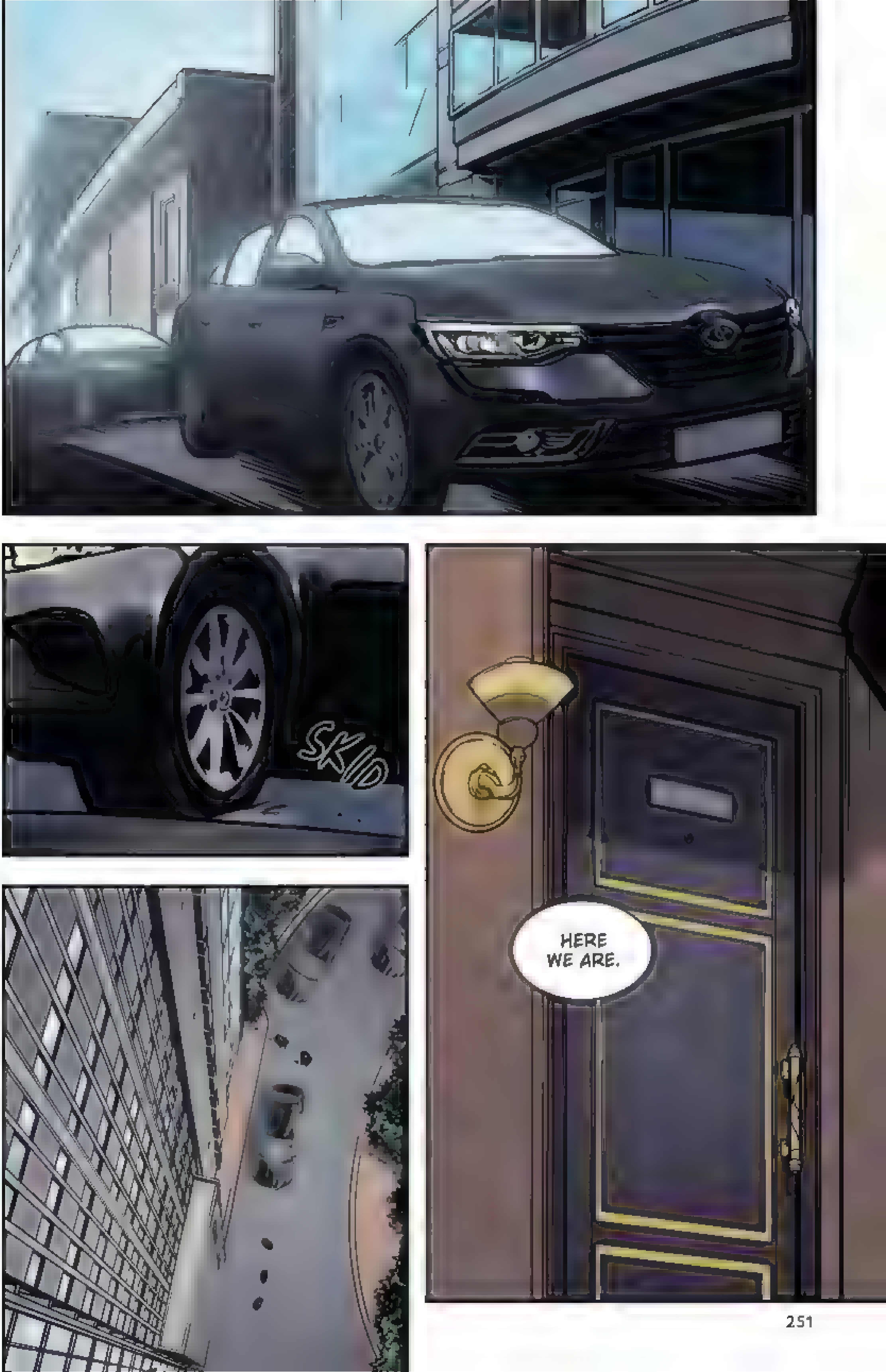
ORIGINALLY, I WAS GOING TO MEET YOU ALONE, BUT OUR ASSISTANT DIRECTOR WANTED TO SEE YOU IN PERSON...
...AFTER YOUR IMPRESSIVE SHOWING IN THE JEJU ISLAND RAID.
IT'S QUITE UNUSUAL.
INFORMATION...
OUR ASSISTANT DIRECTOR WILL TELL YOU THE REST.
HIS CAR IS NEARBY. WOULD YOU LIKE TO MEET HIM?
KA CHAK
I DON'T KNOW IF I'LL BE ABLE TO TRUST ANY INFORMATION YOU GIVE ME.
I'LL THINK ABOUT IT AND GET BACK TO YOU.
I'D FORGOTTEN...
...ONE SHOULDN'T HIDE THEIR BEST CARD WHEN TRYING TO MAKE A DEAL.

AN UPGRADER...

HAVE YOU EVER HEARD OF THE AWAKENED BEING WHO CAN UPGRADE OTHER AWAKENED BEINGS' ABILITIES?


CHAPTER 21
Turning Point

Solo Leveling


SKID
HERE WE ARE.

<Nice to meet you.>
<I'm Michael Connor, assistant director of the Hunter Command Center.>
I'M JINWOO SUNG.
I WILL TRANSLATE FOR YOU.
<I'll get straight to the point, Hunter Sung.>
SLIDE
<These are immigration documents.>
<Normally, it would take a year or two to process them.>
<However, your case is special.>
<One second.>
<Say yes, and in one second you will be an American citizen.>

......
I CAME HERE BECAUSE AGENT WHITE TOLD ME YOU HAD INFORMATION THAT MIGHT INTEREST ME.
THE AWAKENED BEING WHO CAN INCREASE OTHER AWAKENED BEINGS' ABILITIES... THE UPGRADER.
INCREASING SOMEONE'S ABILITIES...IS THAT EVEN POSSIBLE?
SMILE
<Actually, the person with the ability is here now.>

<Please see Ms. Sellner in.>
CLACK
CLACK
<She's the only one in the entire world...>
<...who can help awakened beings surpass the fixed limits of their power.>

<This is Ms. Norma Sellner.>
......
HER AURA IS CERTAINLY DIFFERENT FROM THE TYPICAL AWAKENED BEING.
<Ms. Sellner.>
<Please give Hunter Sung a brief explanation of your abilities.>

<You don't believe me, do you?>
<At first, they all look at me like you do.>
<But...>
FWIP
<...once I give them a taste...>
<...they all come running back to me before long.>
<Ms. Sellner!>

<As you know, Hunter Sung, all awakened beings have set limits to their power.>
<Limits they cannot surpass.>

<That is why the ranks of awakened beings never change...>
<...unless they have a reawakening.>
<Every hunter knows this basic fact.>

MS. SELLNER, DOES THAT MEAN YOU CAN—?
<That's right. I can enable hunters to go beyond their limits.>
<I can increase a hunter's limit in three stages.>
<I don't know whether it's more correct to call it a forced reawakening or just an increase in their latent power, though.>

<What she says is true.>
<The one catch is, only three to four people can receive this benefit each year...>
<...because Ms. Sellner requires a lengthy break between uses of her ability.>
I CAN BE ONE OF THOSE THREE OR FOUR PEOPLE?
IF IT'S TRUE...WHAT AN INCREDIBLE ABILITY THAT IS.
...HOW EFFECTIVE IS IT?
<It's different for everyone, but those who have completed all three stages...>
<...have reported increases ranging from 20 to 30 percent.>
20 TO 30 PERCENT?
HOW COULD IT BE...?

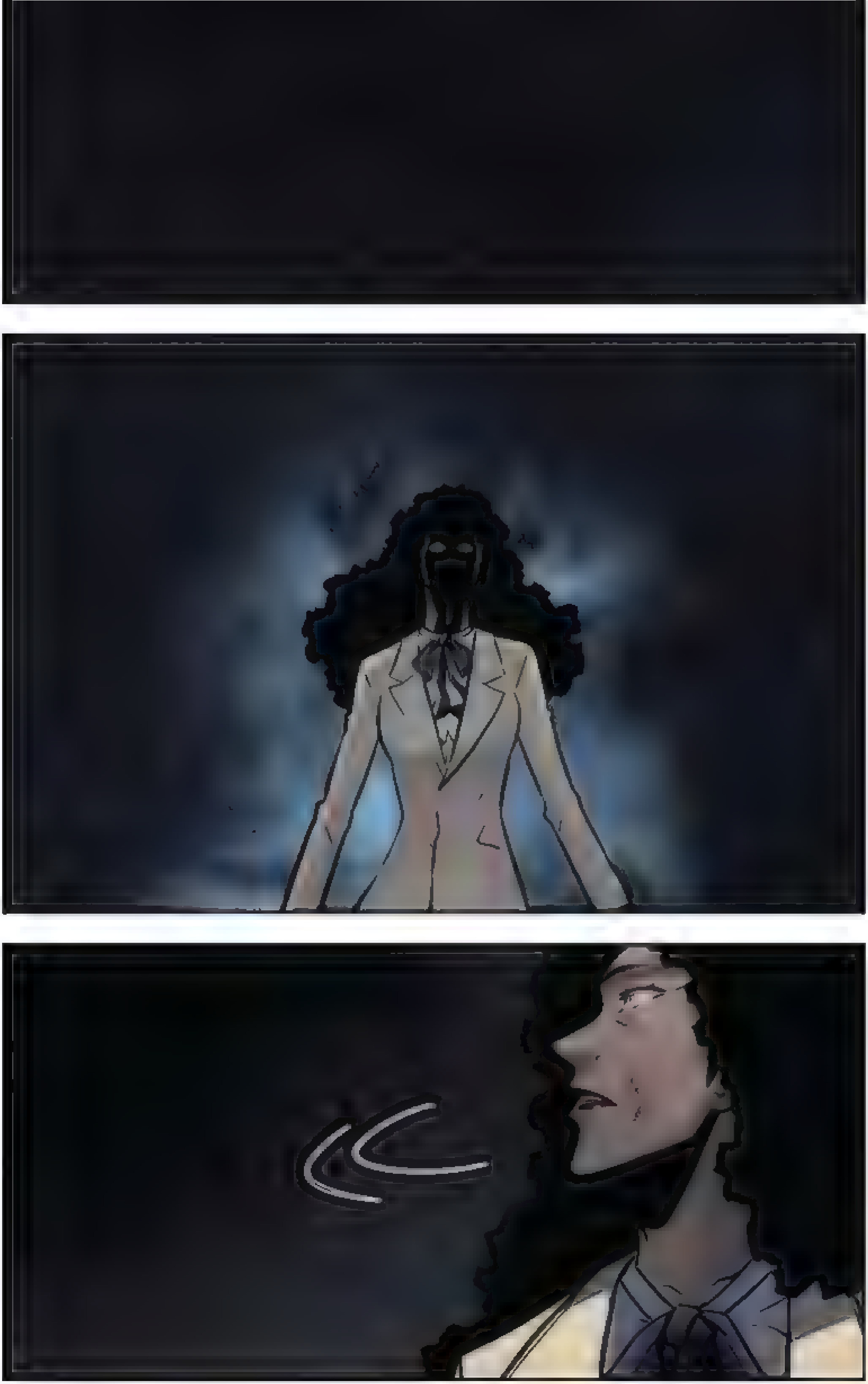
I NOW UNDERSTAND WHY DONGSOO MOVED TO THE US DESPITE ALL THE CRITICISM HE RECEIVED FROM FELLOW KOREANS.
WHO COULD SAY NO TO THAT?
ANY HUNTER WOULD LOSE THEIR MIND OVER THIS.
IF OTHER PEOPLE FOUND OUT ABOUT HER ABILITY...
<That's why Ms. Sellner is with us.>
<We ensure Ms. Sellner is safe and well compensated...>
<...and in return, she enhances the abilities of the hunters of our choosing.>
<Ms. Sellner's ability...>
<...is a gift we can give you, Hunter Sung.>
A GIFT...
ISN'T IT MORE OF A DEAL?

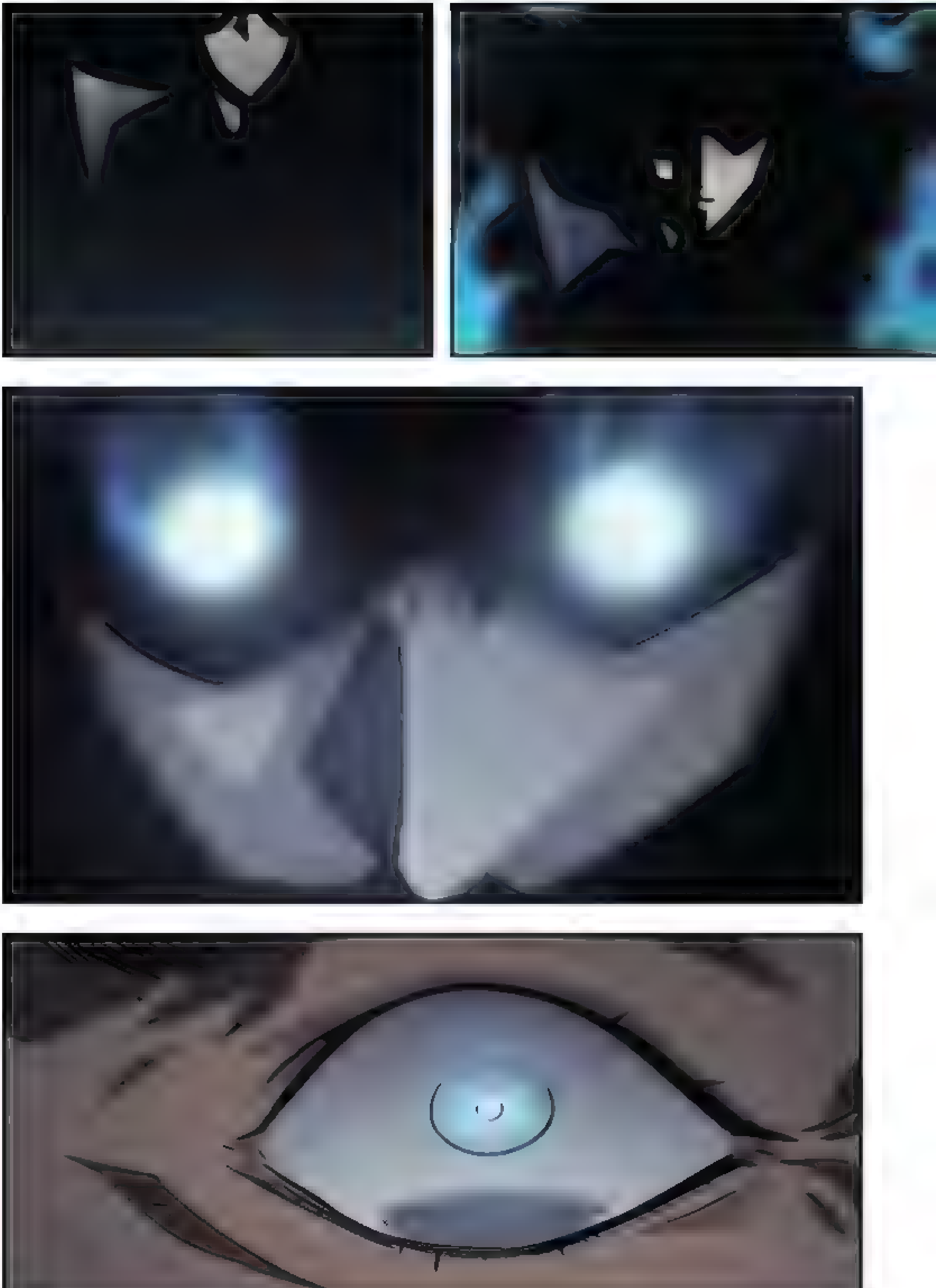
<If you become a hunter for the United States, you would be at the front of Ms. Sellner's queue.>
<Plus, we'd act as a go-between with the guild of your choosing to ensure you get the best deal possible.>
SHF
<There's no rush. I'm here to let you have your first taste.>
EXCUSE ME?
<As we said.>
<It's a gift.>

<It's as she says.>
<So, would you like to expand your limits?>
WITHOUT ANYTHING FROM ME?
<Consider this a preview, Hunter Sung.>
ONCE SHE GIVES THEM A TASTE, THEY COME RUNNING BACK, HUH?
SHE'S THAT CONFIDENT IT'LL WORK.
<Please look into my eyes...>
<...deeply.>

<That's the first step.>
<We did it. He's in!>
<Jinwoo will be in touch as soon as the first stage is complete.>
<If he's impatient enough, he might even sign the immigration papers on the spot.>

<Ryuji Goto had the potential to be a national-level hunter, but even he failed at the Jeju Island raid.>
<This man accomplished the mission using his surprising abilities.>
<I wonder what his limit is...!>





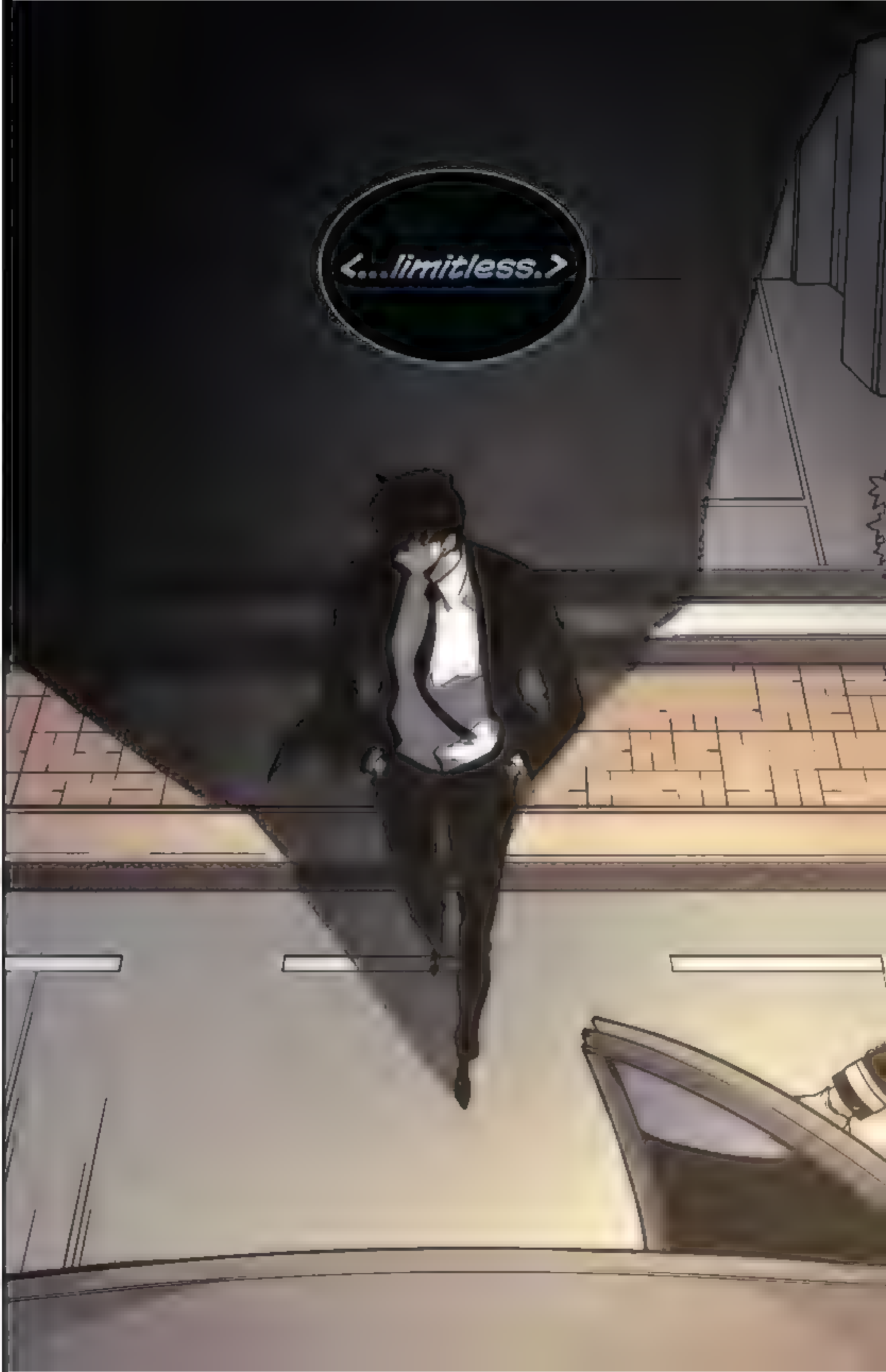
PAPAPAH!
<What did you to Ms. Sellner, you bastard?!>
<Stop!! Are you insane?!>
<Don't you know who this is?!>
<Morons!!>
<But Ms. Sellner is—>
<If you're worried about her, take care of her first!!>

<My apologies, Hunter Sung.>
<What our agents just did was extremely rude.>
WHAT JUST HAPPENED?
...IT'S FINE.
<If you'd pulled that with Thomas Andre or Zhigang Liu, everyone here would be dead.>
<Remember that.>
<Y-yes, sir!>

<Ms. Sellner, what happened?>
SHVR
SHVR SHVR
<You're covered in sweat...>
<Do you feel ill?>
<Ms. Sellner seems to be unwell.>
<May we get in touch with you later?>
...SURE.
<Adam, please take Hunter Sung home.>
<Yes, sir.>

<Ms. Sellner, what happened?>
TRMBL
<H-he...>
<...is...>
TRMBL
<He's a king.>
<And a very powerful king too...>
<Then...>
<...are you saying he's comparable to a national-level hunter?>
<I can't say for sure...>
<This feels different...>
SHAKE
SHAKE
<He's a king, but he's not quite the same.>

<While I was looking into his eyes...>
<...it felt like he was looking into me too.>
<It wasn't Hunter Sung. The endless darkness inside him...>
<...was staring back at me!!>
<And...>
<...he is...>


<...limitless.>

HAAH...
LOSING HUNTER MIN WAS A TERRIBLE BLOW.
NO, HE WAS RETIRED, SO HE WASN'T EVEN A HUNTER.
IT HURTS MY HEART THAT HIS FINAL ACT WAS THIS NOBLE SACRFICE.
BIGGER TRIBULATIONS ARE SURELY AHEAD OF US...
THIS IS LIKELY NOT THE END OF THE DAMAGE.

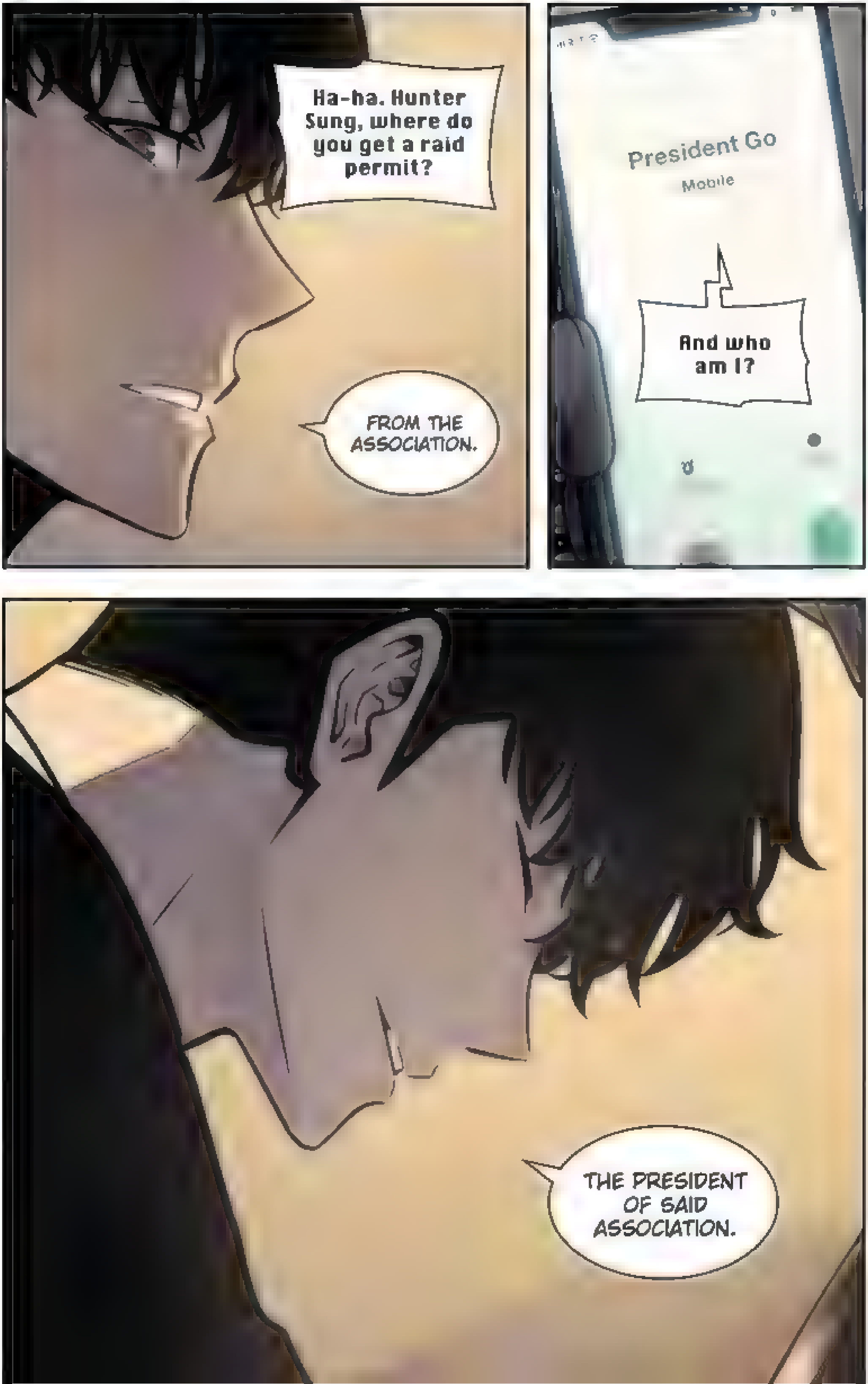
RIIING♪
WHAT?
A B-RANK GATE HAS APPEARED IN THE MIDDLE OF THE ROAD?
AN ORDINARY STRIKE SQUAD CAN'T HANDLE IT IF IT'S A B-RANK.
I'LL CONTACT ONE OF THE LARGER GUILDS.
WAIT A MINUTE...

ISN'T HUNTER SUNG'S GUILD OFFICE NEAR THERE?

THAT WOMAN SAW SOMETHING...
WHAT WAS IT?

Shadow Extraction is successful.
A TRACE OF THE SYSTEM?
[?? Lv. 1] General Rank
WHAT WAS SHE AFRAID OF?
SHE LOOKED SO SCARED, I DON'T THINK SHE'LL WANT TO SEE ME AGAIN.
WHALE
BY THE WAY, WHAT'S WITH ALL THIS TRAFFIC?
SEE, THIS IS WHY IT'S BETTER TO TAKE THE SUBWAY.
GUSVY

President Go
Mobile
Hunter Sung, this is Gunhee Go.
YES, WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU?
EXCUSE ME? A GATE APPEARED IN THE MIDDLE OF THE ROAD?
NO WONDER THERE'S SO MUCH TRAFFIC.
Based on the assessment of our staff, it's a B-rank gate. Would you like to take care of it?
BUT CAN I ENTER THE GATE WITHOUT A RAID PERMIT?


Ha-ha. Hunter Sung, where do you get a raid permit?
FROM THE ASSOCIATION.
President Go
Mobile
And who am I?
THE PRESIDENT OF SAID ASSOCIATION.

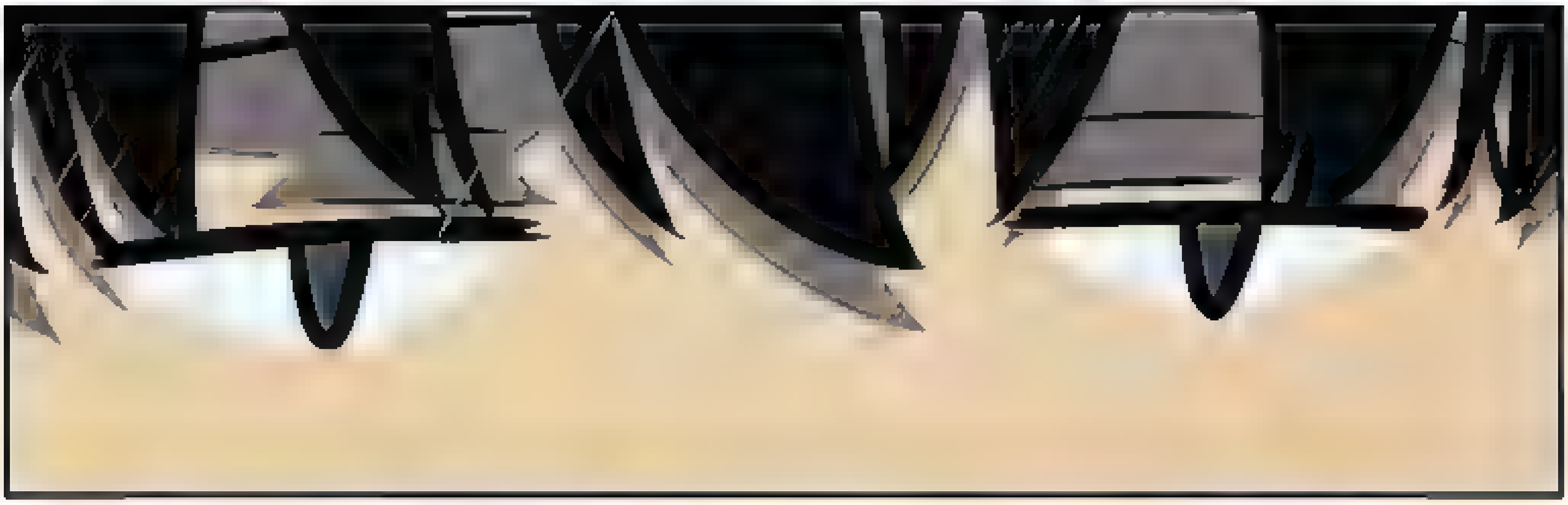
Ha-ha. Please don't worry about it. Feel free to enter.
AWESO— I MEAN, THANK YOU.
YES, THIS BLACK HOLE YOU SEE HERE IS A GATE THAT HAS JUST APPEARED TODAY IN THE MIDDLE—
EVERYONE! THIS AREA IS RESTRICTED!
HOLD ON, PLEASE!
YOU CAN'T JUST COME IN HERE!

H-HUH?
S... S-RANK JINWOO SUNG?!
IT'S JINWOO SUNG!
JINWOO SUNG IS HERE TO PERSONALLY TAKE CARE OF THE GATE!
WH-WHAT BRINGS YOU HERE?
EVEN IF YOU ARE AN S-RANK HUNTER, I CAN'T ALLOW YOU TO IGNORE PROCEDURE.
DO YOU HAVE A RAID PERMIT?

WELL, EVEN IF YOU DID, I CAN'T LET YOU ENTER THE GATE WITHOUT THE MINIMUM NUMBER OF REQUIRED SQUAD MEMBERS!
NOT WHAT I WAS TOLD...
THE THING IS... I'M AT THE SCENE, BUT THERE'S A BIT OF A PROBLEM.
FWP
HERE. IT'S FOR YOU.
PARDON? FOR ME? WH- WHO IS IT?
ANOTHER PERSON YOU PROBABLY WOULDN'T ALLOW IN.
This is President Go.
YES, SIR. YES, SIR!
YES, SIR. YES, SIR. WILL DO, SIR.
I'M GOING IN.

FSS
HMPH! HOPE HE FALLS AND TWISTS HIS ANKLE IN THERE.
I-IS THAT?! TH-THE GATE IS...!

THE GATE'S COLOR IS CHANGING!
KRACKLE
A RED GATE?!
DID I JUST JINX IT...?!



THIS... FEELS LIKE A RED GATE.

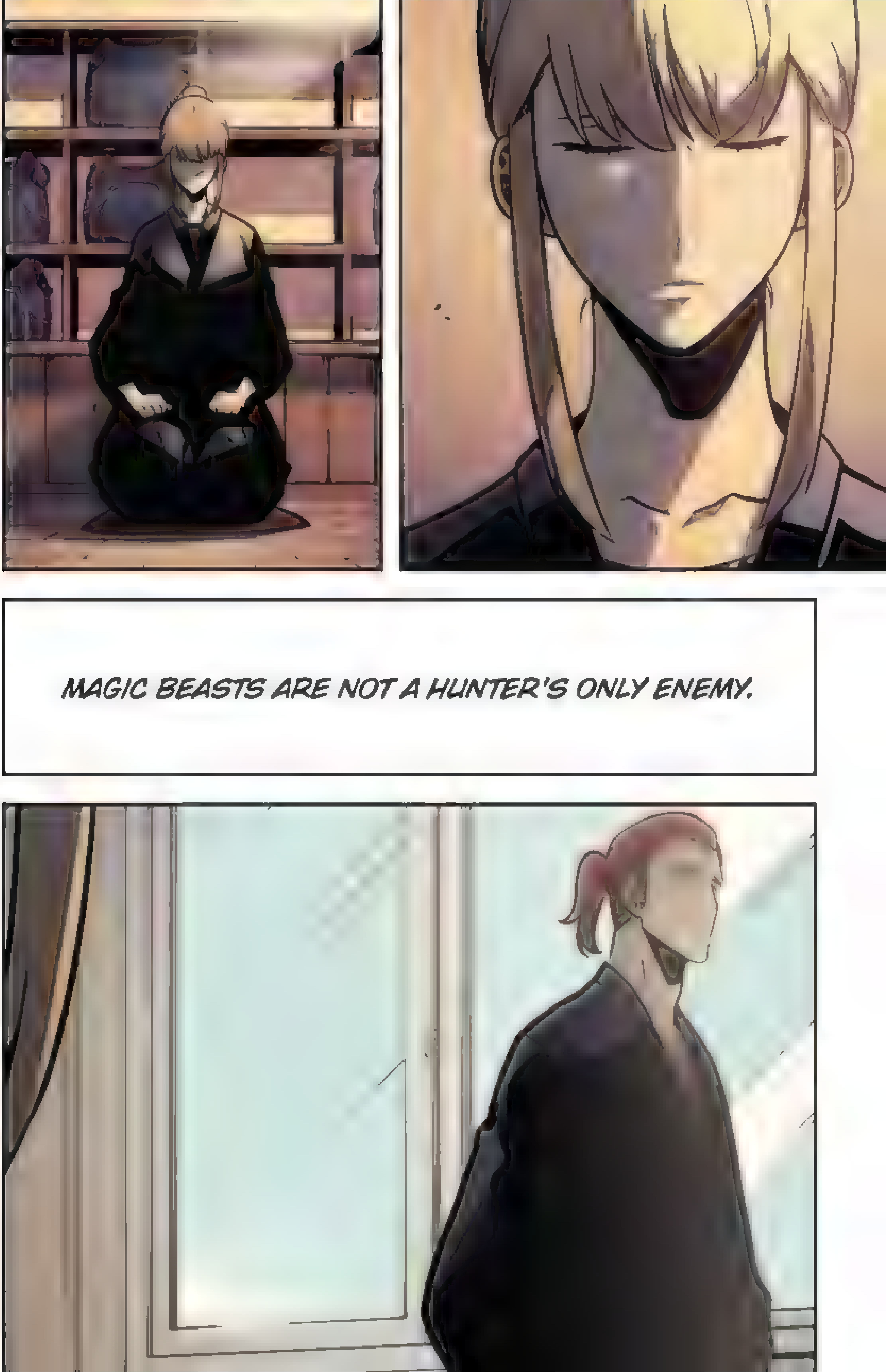
THE GATE IS CLOSED TOO...
I MIGHT HAVE TO PUSH MYSELF A BIT.
PUSH MYSELF...
I WANT YOU TO DO WHAT YOU LIKE.
NOW THAT YOU'VE AWAKENED...
...YOU WILL NEED TO SAVE PEOPLE'S LIVES. ESPECIALLY AS AN S-RANK.
CLACK
JUST LIKE YOUR FATHER DID.

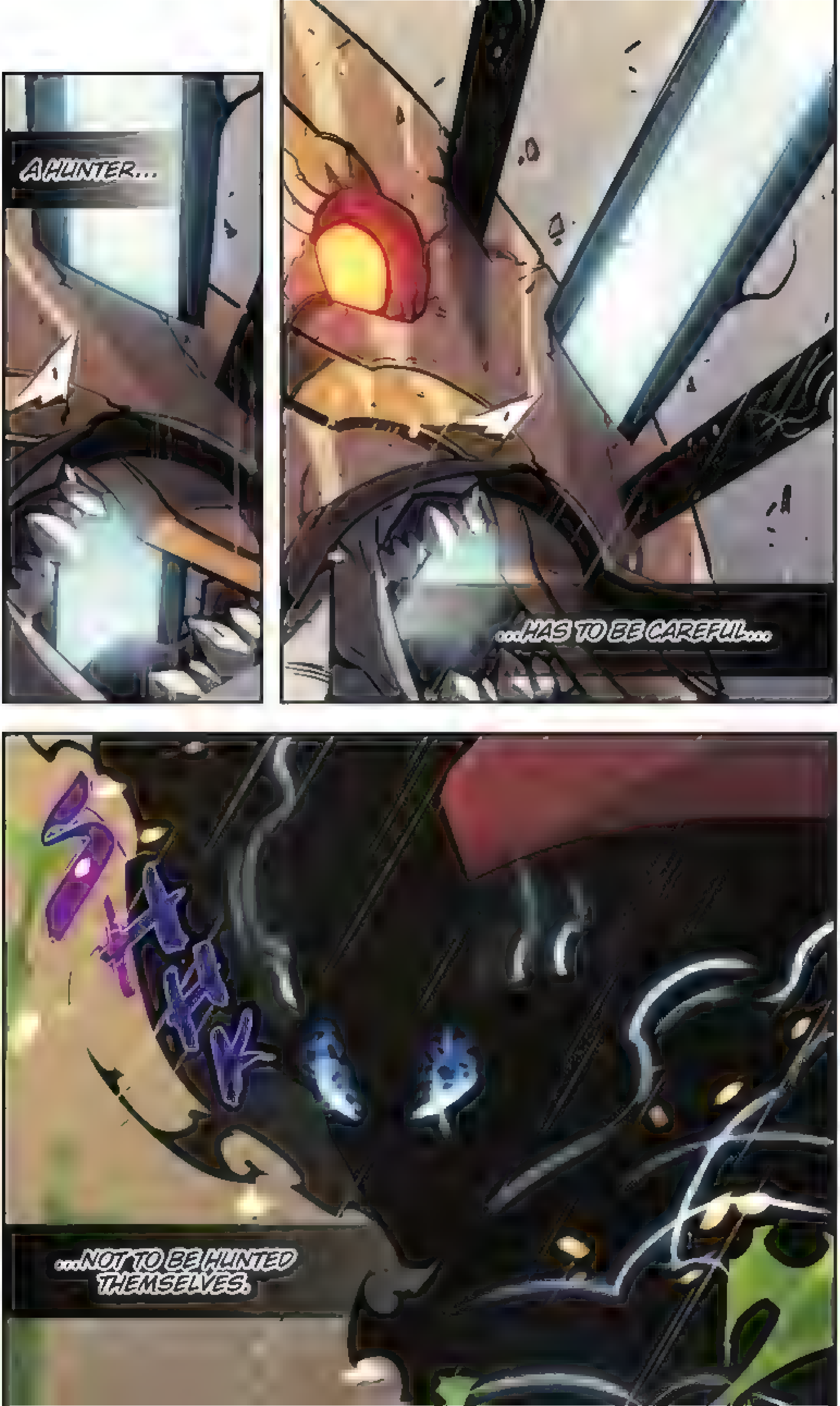
YOUR DAD WAS A FIREFIGHTER BEFORE HE BECOME A HUNTER, REMEMBER?
I MARRIED HIM BECAUSE I LOVED THAT HE SAVED PEOPLE.
YOU'RE YOUR FATHER'S SON, AFTER ALL.
BUT DON'T PUSH YOURSELF TOO HARD, OKAY?
I'M STILL GLAD THAT MOM WASN'T AGAINST THIS.

BESIDES, THIS WON'T BE TOO BAD.
WHOOSH
I'LL BE DONE WITHIN A DAY.

KA-
BOOM

LEAP
LEAP
A HUNTER IS BORN TO HUNT.

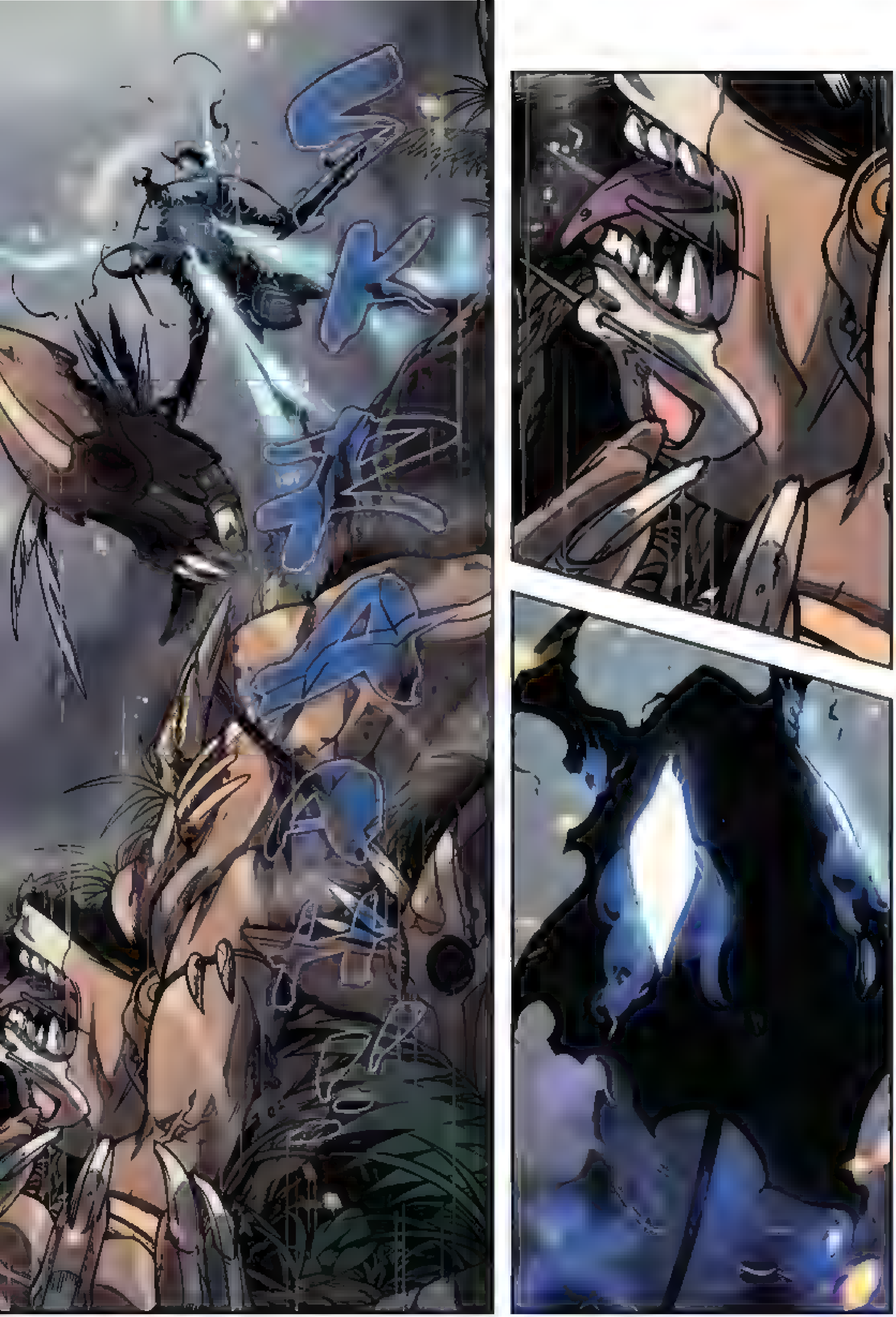

MAGIC BEASTS ARE NOT A HUNTER'S ONLY ENEMY.

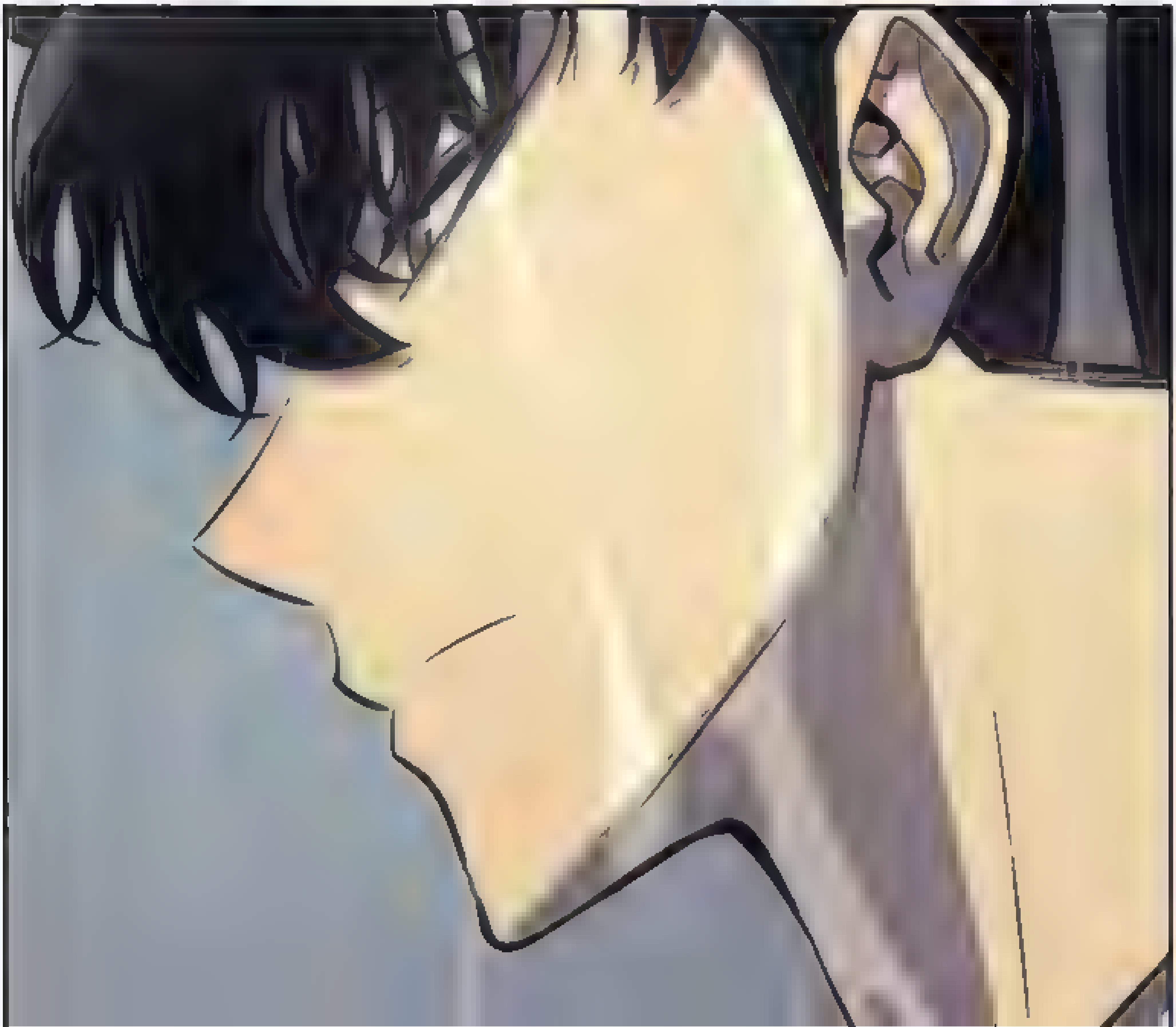

A HUNTER...
...HAS TO BE CAREFUL...
...NOT TO BE HUNTED THEMSELVES.

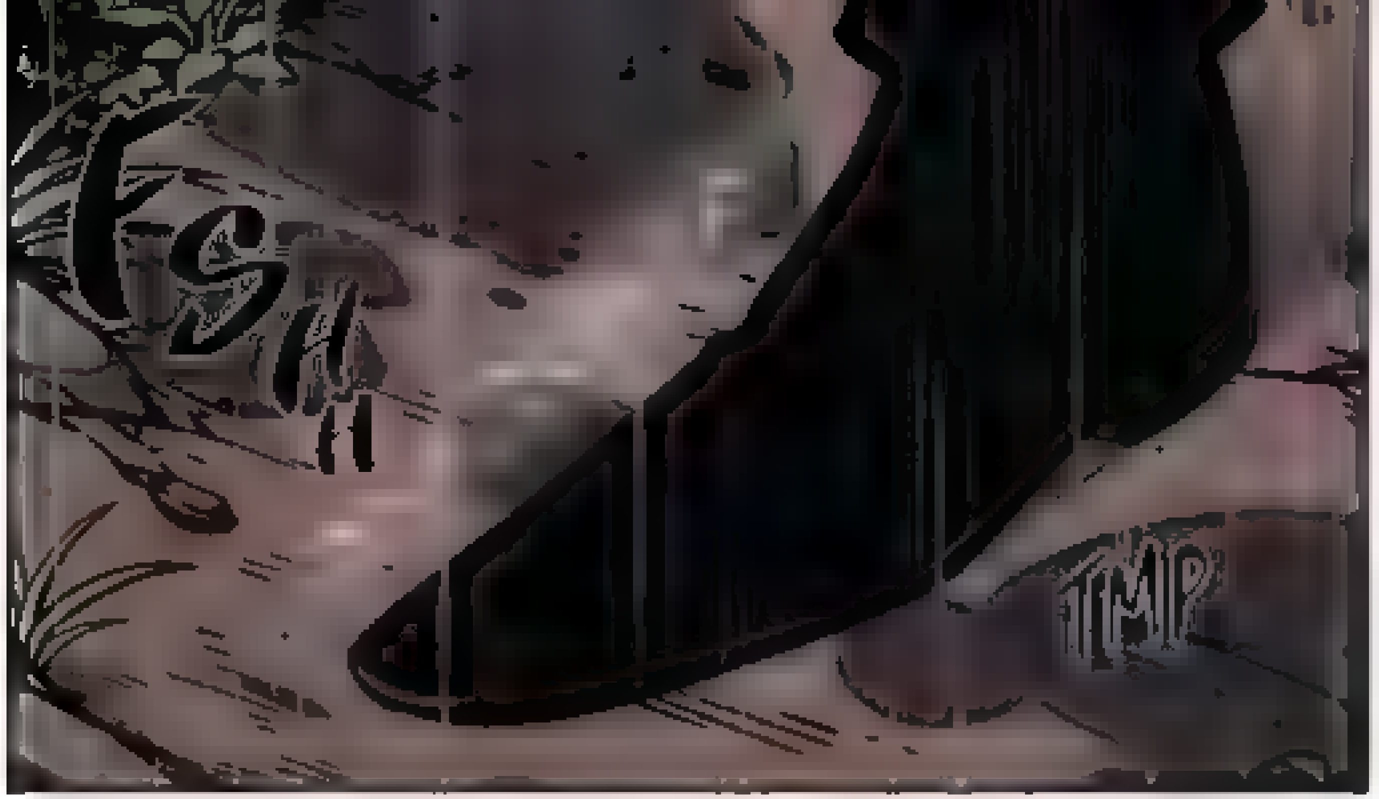
CRACK
BAAAH!

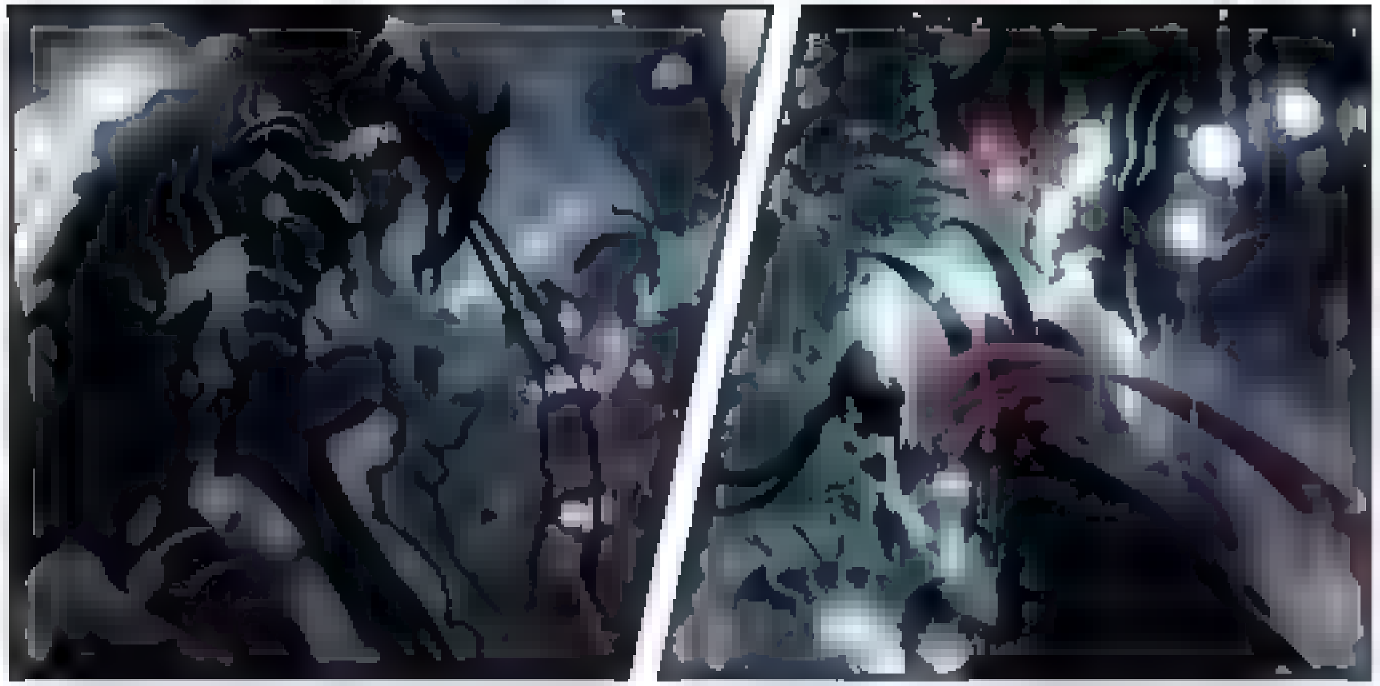
THE ROLES CAN REVERSE AT ANY TIME...
...AND THE HIGHER YOUR RANK AS A HUNTER, THE MORE CAUTIOUS YOU MUST BECOME.

EVEN IF THE PREY NUMBERS IN THE DOZENS...
...OR EVEN IN THE HUNDREDS...
...A HUNTER CONTINUOUSLY HUNTS.



TO DATE, NOT
A SINGLE ONE...



FSH
TMP



WHO
OSH

LET'S MOVE ON TO THE NEXT TARGET.

...WANTS TO STOP HUNTING.
TO BE CONTINUED IN VOLUME 8...

JINWOO GETS EVEN CLOSER TO THE DARKNESS!

THE FIRST TEST FOR JINWOO'S GUILD?!

Solo Leveling

VOL. 8 COMING SOON!

SOLO LEVELING

7

DUBU (REDICE STUDIO) · ORIGINAL STORY BY CHUGONG · ADAPTED BY h-goon

Translation: Hye Young Im ◆ Rewrite: J. Torres ◆ Lettering: Abigail Blackman

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